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COVER: Small Sivalingas (in the tray on top of the central kumbha) are blessed as part of a grand initiation ceremony conducted by Srouta Saiva leader, Sivasri Dr. Attaluri Mrutyumjaya Sharma Garu; Nepalese children stop at a sacred pipal tree on their way to school.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 2013 • THE HINDU YEAR VIJAYA, 5114

Bodhinatha Veylanswami www.gurudeva.org

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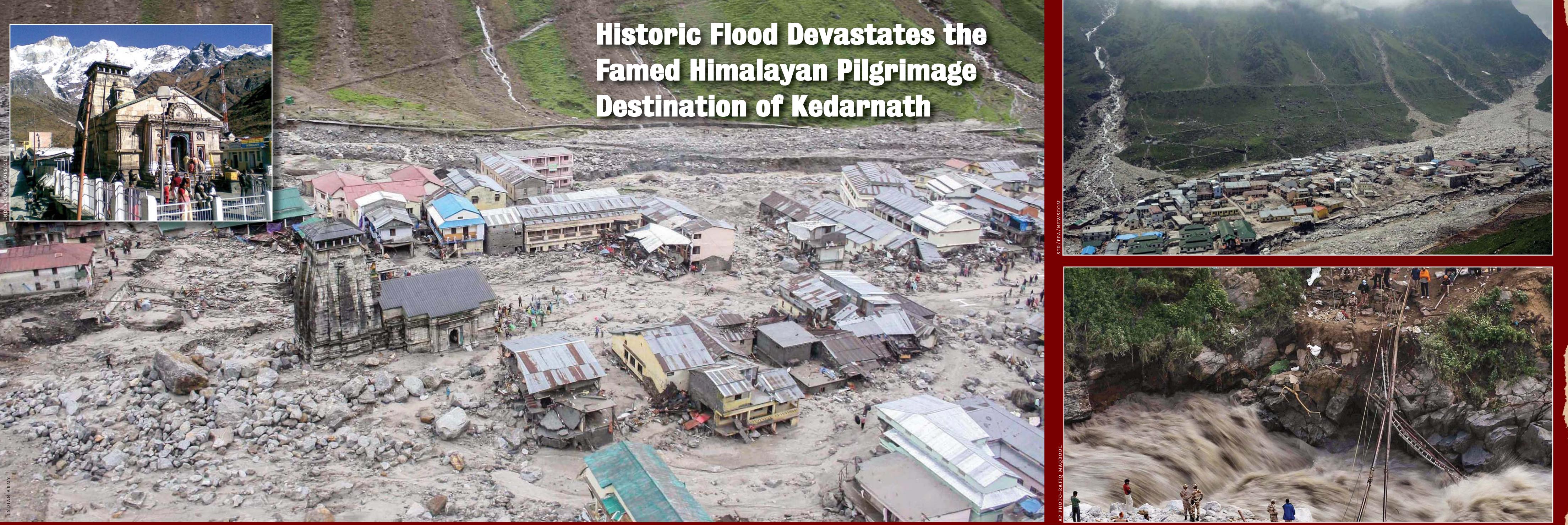
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Best Hindu Magazine

Historic Flood Devastates the Famed Himalayan Pilgrimage Destination of Kedarnath



The Power of Nature: (Clockwise from above) Kedarnath temple stands mostly intact, but with 10 feet of rock and silt on all sides. Kedarnath town lies washed out by the floodwaters. The river usually runs on both sides of the town, but this time the high waters went right through it. Military forces attempt to create a river crossing to rescue those stranded on the other side. Indian military and paramilitary forces help find and rescue stranded pilgrims. Surging floodwaters reach Haridwar far downstream. Many areas are now covered in five or more feet of silt and debris. Numerous sections of the road pilgrims walk to reach Kedarnath were completely washed out, stranding countless persons between landslides and rushing waters. (Inset) Kedarnath temple as it stood before the flooding, note that it used to be elevated some 10 feet high, with a white railing, while now the ground around it reaches the temple entry ways. For more, turn to page 8.





GLOBAL DHARMA

USA

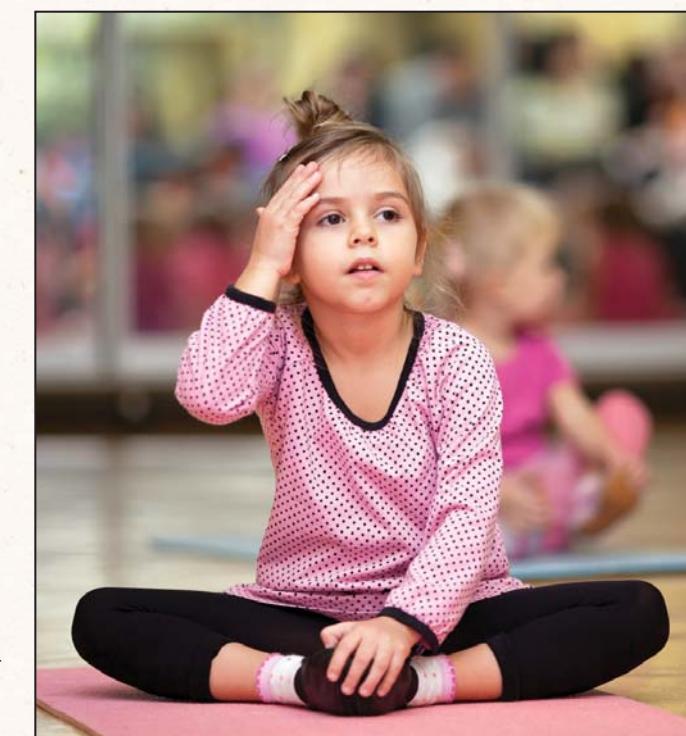
Yoga in Public Schools?

IN SEPTEMBER, 2012, CALIFORNIA's Encinitas Union School District introduced a yoga program as part of its elementary schools' physical education curriculum. As hoped, the yoga practices calmed the students, helped them focus and even reduced bullying. But nobody anticipated the school would land in a lengthy lawsuit.

The district is the first in the country to hire yoga teachers full time. There are twelve teachers in all, funded by a \$532,000 grant from the Jois Foundation, a nonprofit group that promotes Ashtanga Yoga. Students attend the 30-minute yoga classes twice a week.

Anticipating the program might become controversial, the district eliminated anything that might be considered religious, such as chanting of Aum. Even the Sanskrit names for the poses were changed. For example—and we are not making this up—padmasana, the "lotus" posture, became "crisscross applesauce," while savasana, the corpse pose, became "pancake."

The course was a hit with the kids. Eight-year-old Jacob Hagen likes it "because you get to stretch out. And it's good to be the first class because it wakes you up."



Butterfly pose: Young yogi effortlessly assumes badhakonasana

Even after the practices were diluted to little more than stretching, breathing and cute names, local church groups became concerned. Several parents came forth worried that this yoga was a form of religious indoctrination and therefore unconstitutional. With the help of attorney Dean Broyles, president of the conservative advocacy group, National Center for Law and Policy, the parents sued.

The non-jury trial began in February, 2013, under San Diego Superior Court Judge John S. Meyer—who began by announcing to the courtroom that he himself practiced yoga. After some discussion, both sides agreed that this was acceptable.

Broyles argued, "There is a transparent promotion of Hindu religious beliefs and practices in the public schools through this Ashtanga Yoga program." He called Candy Brown, a professor of religious studies at Indiana University. She testified that yoga is Hindu and that "the purpose of ashtanga yoga is to become one with Brahma."

Brown continued by stating her belief that a conspiracy is at work to trick students into a spiritual practice. Judge Meyer challenged her: "So, these Jois-trained instructors are just the

foot soldiers? You think they have been planted in the district?" She replied, "I think that is the case, yeah."

The court proceedings continued for weeks with testimonies from school district staff, school yoga teachers and others. Oddly, no actual Hindus were called to the stand.

On July 1 Judge Meyer ruled that although yoga is a religious practice, it is no longer so when stripped of all cultural references, and it may then be taught

in public schools: "Yoga as it has developed in the last 20 years is rooted in American culture, not Indian culture. A reasonable student would not objectively perceive that Encinitas School District yoga advances or promotes religion." Meyer concluded that the plaintiff's case was culled from personal opinions and unreliable Internet sources. "It's almost like a trial by Wikipedia, which isn't what this court does," said Meyer.

VIETNAM

Ponagar Temple Festival

EACH YEAR, FROM APRIL 30 TO May 2, the little-known Hindu Cham people of Vietnam celebrate the Nha Trang Ponagar Temple Festival in honor of the Goddess Bhagavati, known in Vietnamese as Yan Po Nagar. In 1100 ce the Champa Kingdom occupied most of southern Vietnam and adjacent areas. Later the kingdom declined, and many Cham in what is now Cambodia converted to Islam. The Hindu community in Vietnam

numbers just 60,000.

The Ponagar temple festival is the largest cultural event held by the Cham each year, attracting tens of thousands of tourists. Beginning with the "Lions' Dance," the celebration continues with many other dances, songs and ceremonies welcoming and honoring the Goddess. The local provincial government has recognized the festival as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage" of the nation.



Welcoming the Gods: Dancers make ready for the festival's main ceremony, which includes traditional music, dancing and singing

TOP TO BOTTOM: SHUTTERSTOCK; VIETNAMDISCOVERIES.COM

WASHINGTON, DC

Saraswati Lands in Capitol

A NEW AND LOVELY SIGHT greets people walking past the many embassies and dedicated statues along Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, DC. In front of the Indonesian



A new sight: The 16-foot-tall statue of Goddess Saraswati stands in front of the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, DC

Embassy, just one block from the Indian Embassy, stands a recently created 16-foot statue of Saraswati, Goddess of art, knowledge and wisdom, gifted to the US by the Indonesian Embassy.

The idea for the statue came from Ambassador Dr. Dino Patti Djalal as a statement of the harmonious coexistence of Hinduism and Islam in that Muslim-majority nation. To create the sculpture, craftsman Nyoman Sudarwa was flown in from Bali along with six of his plaster masons. He and his team fabricated the concrete masterpiece in just three months. This is nothing new for them, as it is common in Indonesia to put Saraswati in front of universities and government buildings.

The sculpture, yet to be dedicated, includes at its base a statue of Barack Obama as a child, seen with two of his classmates while attending grade school in Indonesia. The plaque describes Saraswati: "The Goddess of knowledge and art, embodied as a beautiful woman, is a symbol that science is something beautiful and attractive."



Prize spelling: A girl receives her plaque at the prize distribution ceremony, held at the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago on June 16

USA

Dharma Bee for Vivekananda

IN RECOGNITION OF THE 120th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's speech to the Parliament of World's Religions, as

Hindu monk. The program aimed to provide an exciting education while offering youth insight into areas of community service and dharmic living.

Shreya Venkatesh (13), a contestant from Arizona, said she enjoyed the chance to learn more about Hindu culture. At the reward ceremony the head of the local Vedanta Society said, "According to Vivekananda, dharma is a process that makes a brute into a man, and man into God."



A healthy lunch: Student Arianna Francisco seems amused by School Chancellor Dennis Walcott's attempt to eat salad with a spoon (or is it a spork?)



INDIA

Kedarnath: Years to Restore

THE DISASTER STRUCK IN MID-JUNE. It began with a cloud-burst above Charbari Lake in the mountains above Kedarnath. When the heavy monsoon rain clouds get trapped in the high elevations of the Himalayas, they can literally burst, dropping enormous quantities of water in a short time on a small area. This time the large Himalayan lake ruptured its banks, releasing a two-story-high flood of ice, boulders, mud and water into the Mandikini River, a major tributary of the Ganga.

The flood engulfed Kedarnath town and temple on its banks. At 11,755 feet, Kedarnath is the highest and most remote of the four Char Dham sites in this area of the Himalayas. These sites are visited by hundreds of thousands of Hindu pilgrims at this time of year.

Eyewitnesses said huge rocks broke away from Kedar Dome, the third largest peak above the town. Some of the giant boulders stopped just before the Kedarnath shrine, diverting the flood around the temple and leaving it largely intact. Many adjacent buildings were damaged or

destroyed, and thousands of residents and pilgrims drowned.

One rescued pilgrim, Sitaram Sukhatia, told the *Press Trust of India*, "It was shocking to watch a place bustling with people metamorphose in a matter of a few hours into an island of death and destruction."

Following the destruction, the temple's Bhog Murti (a Deity which can be moved) was taken from the shrine by Vageshling, a young temple priest who had survived the flooding. Traveling 61 kilometers, mostly on foot, he delivered the Deity to the temple in Ukhimath where the Deity normally resides during the winter months.

After devastating Kedarnath, the surging water flooded village after village as it coursed downward. Roads and bridges were washed out at thousands of points. Bodies washed up as far away as Haridwar. Birendra Singh, a former army officer, told the press, "There were 67 houses in our Chandrapuri village, out of which 63 were washed away

BISWAJEE BANERJEE/AP



The enduring temple: Kedarnath temple stands alone, intact and silent among the washed-out streets, scattered debris and ruined homes

by the Mandikini River. Not a single official has visited our village as yet. We have nothing to go back to."

Indian military and paramilitary forces were called in from across the nation to search for survivors, transport food and supplies and rescue stranded people. State governments as well as NGOs jumped in to help.

But before serious efforts were started to help the local population, the relief effort focused on

finding and evacuating the hundreds of thousands of far-from-home pilgrims.

Early estimates stated that 300,000 people have been affected by the cataclysm and over 100,000 have been evacuated. Roughly 10,000 people were injured, and 11,000 thought to be missing. An estimated 5,500 have died, though the actual number could be higher. Infrastructure repair and rebuilding will take years.

BRIEFLY...

ACCORDING TO A STUDY

published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, a Journal of the American Medical Association, vegetarians live longer than meat-eaters. The study tracked 73,308 people for nearly six years. Vegetarians in the study experienced 12 percent fewer deaths over the period. Dietary choices appeared to play a big role in protecting the participants from heart disease, from which vegetarians were 19 percent less likely to die than the carnivores.

MORE THAN 14,000 PEOPLE

joined together during the summer solstice in late June of 2013 for the world's largest-ever Bikram Yoga class in New

York's Time Square. "The solstice is the celebration of the sun. As yogis, we worship the sun," said class leader Rajashree Choudhury, a five-time winner of the All-India Yoga Championship. People spread out all over the square to stretch and breath. Some were even meditating and doing japa beside the busy New York streets.

THE SRI VENKATESWARA TEMPLE

opened its doors in Detroit this May. The \$10-million-dollar, 25,000-square-foot temple in Novi, just one of several Hindu temples being built in the Detroit area, reflects the success of Asian Indian Americans in Michigan. Ironically, in July, Detroit became the largest American city to declare itself bankrupt.

ON JUNE 24, 2013, THE

California State Senate passed a Resolution, establishing October as California Hindu American

Awareness and Appreciation Month. Hindu American Foundation member Vineet Sharma stated, "We are extremely grateful to the State Senate for unanimously passing the resolution, which will go a long way to raising awareness and understanding about the Hindu American community and our beliefs."

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HINDUISM TODAY was founded on January 5, 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927–2001). It is a nonprofit educational activity of Himalayan Academy, with the following purposes: 1. To foster Hindu solidarity as a unity in diversity among all sects and lineages; 2. To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; 3. To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; 4. To protect, preserve and promote the sacred *Vedas* and the Hindu religion; 5. To nurture and monitor the ongoing spiritual Hindu renaissance; 6. To publish resources for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma. Join this *seva* by sending letters, clippings, photographs, reports on events and by encouraging others.



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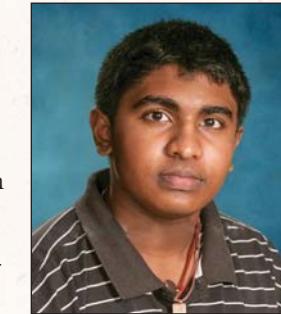
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IN MY OPINION

Guide Our Youth!

For the sake of our religion's future, we must teach children the meaning behind our rituals

BY ANEESH BAIKAVASUNDRAM



made me proud to be a Hindu, despite the many widespread Western misconceptions. One of these misconceptions is even taught in schools, where Hinduism is presented as a purely polytheistic religion. Many, including Hindus, do not know the truth and believe the many inaccuracies.

I'm sure that many Hindu children leave their traditions because of their community's lack of awareness. From a young age, Hindu children in America learn of many other religions, such as Christianity and Islam, but not their own.

It is common today for parents to take their children to temple festivals, and rather than recognizing the temple murtis or explaining anything about the occasion, they just socialize and leave their children clueless. Many parents were raised in a strong religious culture, but the children who grow up here in the West are left in the dark. If this perpetuation of ignorance continues, Hinduism will become a religion of little else but meaningless ritual. Thankfully,

there are temple programs that strive to teach Hindu children about their traditions and customs and clarify misconceptions.

I grew up facing the same cultural struggles felt by other Hindu American youth, or even more; but despite these challenges, I found a way to learn the deeper truths about our religion through many programs and people. I wish to see more Hindus taking an active role in serving their community. I wish to see the elders of the community, like our priests, teaching the younger generation about our Sanatana Dharma. I know firsthand the busy life of a priest, and how difficult it is to find time, but if my experience has taught me anything, it's that it is imperative that our priests and religious leaders guide our youth.

ANEESH, 17, is a high school senior with interests in biology, drama and philosophy.



Temple as the Source of Culture

By consciously connecting the home shrine to the temple, the family sustains tradition and strengthens relationships

BY SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLAN SWAMI

FOR SOME TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, FROM ABOUT 1975 to 2001, HINDUISM TODAY's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, was instrumental in helping temples get established. Gurudeva guided 37 temples in the United States, Canada, Guadeloupe, Denmark, England, Fiji, Germany, Mauritius, New Zealand, Reunion, Russia, Sweden and Sri Lanka—giving each community or temple an icon of God, usually Lord Ganesha, and guidance when needed. He also helped dozens more temples by sharing his global experience and understanding of community building or by publicizing their project in HINDUISM TODAY.

Why did Gurudeva devote so much energy to helping establish the temples of organizations with no formal ties to his own? He did it because of a strong conviction that it is the temple that perpetuates Hindu culture. As he explained, if Hindus move to a country and do not build a temple, after a few generations their precious culture will have been lost.

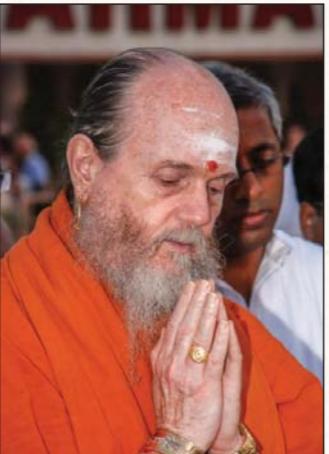
At a satsang held in July 2000, a devotee asked Gurudeva: "What's happening to Hindu culture? It seems in Bollywood, actors and actresses are turning Western and encouraging everyone else to do so. Will Hindu culture, or Indian culture, last very long after this?"

Gurudeva responded: "We can see in the world today that combative culture—where people do not get along but sometimes pretend to get along when they do not get along—comes from the offices and the factories and the nonreligious activities. Indian culture may be going down in India, but it is definitely coming up in the West because of the worship within the temples. It's our relationship with God, the Gods and the Goddesses that establishes our relationship with men, women and children. Culture comes from being sensitive to other people's feelings as we are sensitive within the temple to the feelings of the Gods and the vibration emanating from the inner sanctum. Without religion in one's life and the practice of that religion in the home shrine, in the temple, and pilgrimage once a year to a far-off place, culture quickly fails and the competitive culture comes into play."

He continued, "While there are many that are trying to bring the best of the West to the Far East, there are still in the West many who are trying to bring the best of the Far East into the West. As long as religion and worship and the practice of pilgrimage and all the refinements of our great religion are present, culture will be there."

The Hindu temple can act as a powerful spiritual hub that radiates out Hindu culture and devotional practices into the homes of families who attend regularly, at least once a week. The process of strengthening culture can happen on a number of levels.

The most basic is simply learning and following the many



traditions and protocols associated with visiting a temple. No devout Hindu will approach the sacred home of God without proper preparation. The simple necessities include a bath, donning clean clothes and preparing an offering tray, whether simple on a normal day or elaborate for a festival. These acts are all important parts of temple-going.

On arrival we need to wash our feet and handle shoes in the specified way. Then the customary prostrations to the Deities, followed by circumambulation and presenting our offerings with a loving heart. When attending puja, men and women may be required to sit on separate sides of the mandapam. At key points throughout the rites we pray and

respond in specific ways. As children follow the parents' traditional protocols, they develop an appreciation for worship and sacred objects, respect for elders, an understanding of the importance of physical cleanliness and mental purity, and a fondness for familial and communal devotion.

After years of such practice, essential character qualities, such as humility and devotion, can deepen. Devotion here means love of God. These qualities, which are present in every cultured Hindu, may not develop in an individual growing up in the West unless he or she participates in regular worship.

The second level of the temple's influence on the home begins when a shrine is established in the home and worshiped at daily. Wherever possible, it should be a separate room, not in a cabinet or on a shelf. Such a dedicated space makes everyone living in the home think more about God, reflect more on their behavior and be less inclined to become angry or argue, as they are living in God's presence.

Going to the temple every week can actually bring some of the temple's sanctity into the shrine room. My guru taught that lighting an oil lamp in the shrine room after coming home from the temple brings the temple's shakti into your home. That devotional act brings devas who were at the temple into the home shrine, where, from the inner world, they can bless the family and protect the home.

The temple's third level of cultural influence begins when a family member, generally the father, performs regular puja in the home. In a sense, he becomes the family priest, emulating the temple priests



A. MANIVEL...

while following a simpler, non-public liturgy known as atmartha puja. Such a full puja done daily steadily strengthens the home's religious vibration.

Quite fittingly, the structure of the puja ceremony arises from the magnanimous spirit of hospitality for which Hindu culture is

God in the home: Each day in this Saivite shrine room, God Siva is worshiped as Nataraja, Lord of the Divine Dance. By lighting a simple oil lamp after coming home from the temple, the family forges subtle connections which sustain and uplift all in the home.

famous. All guests are received and treated as God, and God is no exception. During this daily morning puja rite, family members gather in their well-appointed shrine room to honor God as their royal guest. They receive Him warmly, offer a seat, serve water to quench His thirst, bathe and dress Him in beautiful clothes, burn the finest incense for His enjoyment, honor Him with light, flowers, chanting and offerings of food. It is an intimate, personal interaction. Throughout the puja, the officiant chants sweetly to the Deity in Sanskrit, describing these kindly acts and beseeching His blessings. Finally, the pujari thanks the Deity for His presence, bids Him farewell and humbly apologizes for any errors he may have unknowingly committed.

The fourth level of temple influence on the home begins when the shrine is strong enough that we feel that the main Deity of the shrine, for example Lord Siva or Lord Venkateshwara, is the head of the house. When that happens, we would never think of having a meal without first offering a portion to God. We would naturally want to always worship God, even if briefly, before leaving the home and upon returning.

For Hindu culture to strengthen the home to this extent, the entire family needs to be involved. To illustrate, let me share a story. One of our devotees was responsible for the Sunday morning Hinduism classes for a group in Singapore. He found that parents would commonly drop the children off, go shopping for two hours, return and pick them up, all the while expecting the teachers to make their children better Hindus. Though this approach works for learning the fine arts, such as dancing or playing an instrument, it does not work for Hinduism.

The difference is this. For children to learn dance or music, the parents need not know how to dance or play the instrument. However, for Hinduism to be learned, it is necessary for the whole family to practice it together. This is because Hinduism is an all-encompassing spiritual way of life, informing every aspect of the family's daily and weekly routine, and not just in the shrine room. Having the children study Hinduism at the temple is important. But if the parents are also involved in the study, there is much greater potential for actually augmenting Hindu culture and religious conversations in the home. In fact, some Hindu groups will not accept children into classes unless the parents also enroll in a parallel study for adults.

I like to compare Hindu temples to an electrical distribution system. On the remote Hawaiian island of Kauai, where we live, there is one main electrical generating plant with power lines to five distribution substations to which customers in each region are connected. This can be likened to a ray of spiritual energy coming from the

celestial worlds (electrical plant) to five temples (substations), each with a connection which powers the homes of devotees who worship there regularly (customers). The electricity lights up the house and empowers all sorts of appliances. The energy from the temple illuminates the family's path and enlivens the culture.

LETTERS

Namaste from Italy

We've had the pleasure to read in HINDUISM TODAY (April/May/June, 2013) the article about the recognition of the Italian Hindu Union (Sanatana Dharma Sangha) by the Italian Government. To us, the achievement of this *ententes* (diplomatic resolution) represents a great success. It is an attainment which we and others have worked for over a period of seventeen years. In a nation that hosts the Vatican State, and where religious freedom has been in practice for only a few decades, this *ententes* with Buddhism and Hinduism is really an historic victory. We hope you are all prosperous and joyful. Thank you.

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Exceptional Magazine

The April, 2013, issue of HINDUISM TODAY was exceptionally fine. I loved the article on the worship of Lord Siva; in fact, I love that whole feature, "From the Agamas." Wonderful! And the article on animals was a treat. The piece about the universality across all traditions of food blessings was lovely, too. Every page, even "Quotes and Quips," was the best ever. Thank you all so very much. Touching your feet with love and gratitude.

GAYATRI RAJAN
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Our Great Religion

Hinduism is the oldest religion, a most scientific and powerful way of life. It is based in the sacred scriptures, the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. These sacred scriptures were the first to speak about God, before any other modern religion came into existence. Hinduism is the only religion which teaches respect for every creature of the Universe. Other religions often go the other way, thinking that seeing God in the highest and lowest of beings is blasphemy. This is absolutely wrong. Our respect towards such beings is our divinity.

We as Hindus should not forget that the greatest worship is to the Supreme God. Deities too, are beings who live through the cycles of being and nonbeing. The greatest difficulty we Hindus face is the existence of the caste system, which is a very strong point for other religions to criticize. The *Vedas* do not support today's caste system, but only speak of the different *ashramas* (stages of life) and *varga* (astrological divisions). Hindu priests know rites and rituals which alone do not satisfy the spiritual cravings of the individual. True gurus must come forward and give the pure teachings of our scriptures to

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It's Time for Change

Christian channels and websites proudly announce that millions of Hindus are converting to Christianity. Most of the Hindu rituals and practices are adopted by Christian churches and followers, so much so that a person might have a Hindu name and wear Hindu attire, but not really be one. I don't think that by simply condoning Church evangelism, India will be able to retain its predominantly Hindu identity.

What Hindus need to do is reach out to the poor who are looking for better opportunities in life. These Hindus will no longer tolerate being treated as Untouchables or Dalits while being maligned without fault. Such a person will often prefer to take up a new religion, however superficial, to escape his identity as a low-caste Hindu. Through this he is able to get support for his children's education—but only after conversion, of course. I am not shocked but deeply saddened by these events.

I'm surprised that few of our Hindu spiritual leaders openly condemn caste discrimination. Why are the gurus silent on this issue? Why don't they invoke the masses, whom they routinely address, to give up this subtle violence and adopt healthier and loving lives. I think Hindu priests should begin to play a role similar to that of a priest in a Christian church. He should be able to empathise with the needy and give necessary suggestions and even help in trying times. For this, the temples themselves need to be more than just a place of worship.

I am told that the Christian church "cares for the smallest needs of the believers." Those that are enticed to convert are often convinced that they are doing the right thing. Can they be blamed? Most importantly we must ask, what can our religion offer to the poorest of the poor?

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Well Done

HINDUISM TODAY is the only magazine I subscribe to. So well done, right down to the photos, typesetting, jokes and comprehensive diversity of topics. I think it would be advantageous to have a dictionary of terms as I tend to forget over the months some of the

meanings for key Sanskrit words. Have you considered it? Much obliged.

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Innovative Temples

The article on the first quake-ready stone temple (July/Aug/Sept 2013) is really inspiring. The devotion of the members and the spirit of guru bhakti to complete the temple against all odds is really an example to cherish. Iraivan Temple on Kauai started the technology of fly ash cement, which was new to the world. Here, this temple has used a new technology to counter the effects of an earthquake. Today's Hindu temples are setting new standards in the building industry.

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Fascinating to Read

While searching your archives online, I came across an article on Goa (Oct/Nov/Dec 2011). It was fascinating to read and I've learned a lot. It was new information for me that Goa has a majority of 65% Hindu population despite such savage methods used by Portuguese Christian and Muslim proselytizers. We Hindus never believe in forced conversions and the attempts by Islam and Christianity have little effect on India's Hindus. It speaks for the truth of the Hindu faith and the resilience of its followers.

BYRAVAN VISWANATHAN
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Traversing Our Personal Paths

This is in response to the letter, "Guidance Needed" (July/Aug/Sept, 2013). Like the author, I am an admirer of HINDUISM TODAY magazine and also a gay Hindu. However, unlike the author, I disagree that the modern gay Hindus' only options are to live dishonestly, become a monk or resign to drugs and promiscuity. This sad letter indicates someone who is, as he admits, lost. For that my heart goes out to him.

I am an American, gay, male, Hindu, hardly out of my twenties, and I live a dharmic life that is satisfying. My work in this life has meant owning my personal karmas and making great effort to direct those karma's responsibly, while personally monitoring my sadhana as best I am able. None of us is truly lost, but until we choose our own path and actively begin our journey with dharma, we're likely to feel lost. You must begin moving on your own to get going anywhere. Waiting for someone to support you in the way you

expect will likely mean much wasted time.

Many of my Indian friends have parents who are very traditional and believe that anything gay is a creation of Western culture. Knowing this isn't true, and knowing that some of Hinduism's own myths and scriptures affirm non-hetero-normative unions, it's my sincere hope for all Hindus, not just the author and those like him, that a respected and widely read beacon like HINDUISM TODAY will recognize the need of our gay Hindu brothers and sisters, and respond with compassion and support.

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Remarkable Magazine

The issue on Kumbh Mela (April/May/June) has been stunningly spectacular. Your editorial team did a remarkable job.

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Celebrations of Vivekananda

Revered Swami Vimokshanandaji Maharaj, the Spiritual Head of the Ramakrishna Centre of South Africa, was invited to visit Gaborone, Botswana, in July this year as part of the community's celebration of Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birth Anniversary. He

was accompanied by 13 devotees from South Africa and warmly welcomed at the Sri Balaji Temple on the 18th with puja, bhajan and prasadam. The next day he gave a talk to 400 students at the Lagae Academy on the importance of education, and in the evening spoke at the Sai Centre on Swami Vivekananda's life and the importance of harmony of religion.

On the 20th, the main function of his visit was held at the Botswana Hindu Society Hall in Maru-a-Pula with government officials and the High Commissioner of India present. The highlight of the evening was a rendition of Vivekananda's first address to the Parliament of the World's Religion in Chicago in 1893. It was followed by a performance by students of the Indian School for Dance and Music. The evening closed with Vimokshananda's address on the hardships Vivekananda encountered when first in America, and his emphasis on serving God in man. The visit concluded the next day with a one-on-one interaction between Vimokshananda and 16 local Hindu youth. Swami's love, guidance and holy company left an indelible mark on the devotees of Gaborone.

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Prayer to the US House

I just saw the speech delivered by our satguru

to the US congress (see p. 50). Please convey my regards and congratulations to the satguru. Certainly it is a significant achievement for the satguru to be called to deliver a prayer at the US Congress. His prayer will resound throughout the world like the sound of *Aum* in the cosmos.

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Inspiring Resources

Your articles on Hinduism are great sources of inspiration for every Hindu. I am grateful to you for the great services you are rendering for spiritual reawakening. Namaste.

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Letters with writer's name, address and daytime phone number should be sent to:

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Letters may be edited for space and clarity and may appear in electronic versions of HINDUISM TODAY.

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Empower Hinduism Today in your estate plan

THE HINDUISM TODAY PRODUCTION Fund (a part of Hindu Heritage Endowment) has been building slowly and steadily for 20 years and has now grown enough to begin subsidizing high quality articles on a regular basis.

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Our model is *The National Geographic Magazine*. Its powerful endowments have enabled it to weather all that the world has cast its way for the last 125 years! And it continues to this day to grow in quality and reach. It is currently translated into some twenty of the most spoken languages on earth, with more coming on board every year. Each language has its own local translation and editorial staffs on duty full time.

This is the sort of future we need to build for our magazine. An unshakable HINDUISM TODAY will reflect a secure,

widely understood, widely practiced and thriving Hinduism.

Many people today appreciate HINDUISM TODAY for the gems they find in it that inspire their lives. Some see it as the messenger for a higher concept of ourselves and each other—something the world so desperately needs today. We imagine that in the years, decades and generations to come, there will be as great a need for HINDUISM TODAY as there is today, perhaps a greater need. And we want to be there, fully equipped to meet that need.

We invite you to be there, too, and make a momentous difference, by making the Production Fund one of the beneficiaries in your estate plan. A good response from you and other supporters—and the magazine's future is guaranteed.

Please visit our Hindu Heritage Endowment website, www.hheonline.org. In simple, clear and relevant terms (HINDUISM TODAY style), it elucidates the many ways to prepare a legacy, the elements of estate

Hinduism Today
Production Fund Newsletter
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to empower Hinduism
and uplift the world



Planned Giving Newsletter

Toward a secure Hinduism: Above, the Production Fund e-newsletter head; below, the Hindu Heritage Endowment e-newsletter head; right, the special, comprehensive Vivekananda issue made possible by a grant from the Production Fund.

planning, the various forms of giving and the options available that benefit donor and beneficiary. At himalayanacademy.com/email-news, you may subscribe to our Hindu Heritage Endowment e-newsletter for tips about planned giving, and/or to our Production Fund e-newsletter, for news of the magazine and its all-important Production Fund. Contact us at hhe@hindu.org or call 1-808-634-5407.

QUOTES & QUIPS

The real meaning of the scriptures can only be known in the silence of the mind.

Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, Kerala's "hugging saint"

You are God. God sees through your eyes, hears through your ears, speaks through your mouth. **Satguru Siva Yogaswami** (1872-1964), Sri Lankan mystic

When you demand nothing of the world, nor of God, when you want nothing, seek nothing, expect nothing, then the Supreme State will come to you uninvited and unexpected. **Nisargadatta Maharaj** (1897-1981), Indian teacher and philosopher

A person who has realized the principle of nonviolence has God-given strength for his weapon, and the world has not yet known anything that can match it. **Mahatma Gandhi** (1869-1948)

The touch of an infinite mystery passes over the trivial and the familiar, making it break out into ineffable music. The trees, the stars, and the blue hills ache with a

DID YOU KNOW?

The Sacred Lotus Flower

THE LOTUS FLOWER, *NELUMBO NUCIFERA*, POSSESSING BOTH medicinal and culinary uses, has long been significant and sacred to many cultures. Throughout history it has represented the inner depths of man, reflecting in its prepossessing petals the polychromatic patterns of our universe. Now, yet another of this flower's wonders has been brought to light.

An international team of researchers from the University of Adelaide has sequenced and described the lotus genome in a paper published online at genomebiology.com. Their research delves into the evolution of this ancient plant, which has apparently been cultivated as an edible crop for more than 7,000 years. One of their most interesting findings is that the lotus flower has the astounding ability to regulate its body temperature, much like warm-blooded mammals.

It was found that over a two- to three- day period the lotus was able to keep a constant temperature of around 32-34 degrees by generating and controlling its own heat, while the surrounding



environment varied by up to 30 degrees. A biochemical pathway was found which the plant uses for its temperature regulation. This pathway can be switched on or off, depending on whether more or less heat is needed. This generated heat, along with the flower's aromas, apparently makes the lotus blossoms particularly attractive to pollinating insects.

are the eye, You are the pupil of the eye, You are the image that dances in the eye, the affable! Bestow Your grace so that I may approach Your sacred feet! **Sivavakkiyar** (10th century), Tamil poet

Give yourself up to the wave, and you will be absorbed by the current; having dived into the sea, you do not return anymore.

Anandamayi Ma (1896-1982), Bengali mystic

When diksha is given to a competent disciple, the guru enters into his soul, establishes himself as the disciple's inner Self and by means of his power, removes all the impurities that limit the essential nature of the disciple's Self. **Sarvajnananottara Agama**

Live morality before you talk of it. Practice meditation before you preach it. Taste goodness before you recommend it. Gain bliss before you offer it to others. **Swami Chinmayananda** (1916-1993), founder of Chinmaya mission

Whatever world the man of purified mind desires, whatever desires he wishes to fulfill, all these he attains. Therefore, let whoever is



desirous of prosperity worship the man of Self Realization. The man of Self Realization knows the supreme Brahman upon which the universe is based and shines radiantly. **Atharva Veda, Mundaka Upanishad 3.1.10**

Youth is not a time of life—it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of ripe cheeks, red lips and supple knees. It is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotions. It is freshness of the deep springs of life. Nobody grows old by merely living a number of years. People grow old only by deserting their ideals. Years wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. **Swami Bua Ji Maharaj** (1889-2010), centenarian yogi

It's indescribable. That should be clear. Neti, neti. We're not trying to describe it. Other experiences in meditation we describe. We say, "Okay let's go from a moon-like glow inner light into a slightly more intense one." But when it comes to the Self there's no description except that awareness is missing.

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami, publisher of *Hinduism Today*

Just as the memory of each detail of your yesterday has flowed through you, so does intellectual knowing eventually flow through the life of the person who contains it, as a thing of only temporary value.

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (1927-2001), founder of *Hinduism Today*

B A S I C S

A Hindu View of Evil

EVIL IS OFTEN LOOKED UPON AS A force against God. But the Hindu knows that all forces are God's forces, even the waywardness of *adharma*. This is sometimes difficult to understand when we see the pains and problems caused by men against men. Looking deeper, we see that what is called evil has its own mysterious purpose in life. Yes, bad things do happen. Still, the wise never blame God, for they know these to be the return of man's self-created karmas, difficult but necessary experiences for his spiritual evolution.

Whenever we are injured or hurt, we understand that our suffering is but the fulfillment of a karma we once initiated, for which our injurer is but the instrument who, when his karma cycles around, will

be the injured. Those who perform seemingly evil deeds are not yet in touch with the ever-present God consciousness of their immortal soul.

When the outer, or lower, instinctive nature dominates, one is prone to anger, fear, greed, jealousy, hatred and backbiting. When the intellect is prominent, arrogance and analytical thinking preside. When the superconscious soul comes forth, the refined qualities are born—compassion, insight, modesty and the others.

The animal instincts of the young soul are strong. The intellect, yet to be developed, is nonexistent to control these strong instinctive impulses. When the intellect is developed, the instinctive nature subsides. When the soul unfolds and overshadows the well-developed intellect, this mental harness is loosened and removed. When we encounter wickedness in others, let us be compassionate, for truly there is no intrinsic evil.

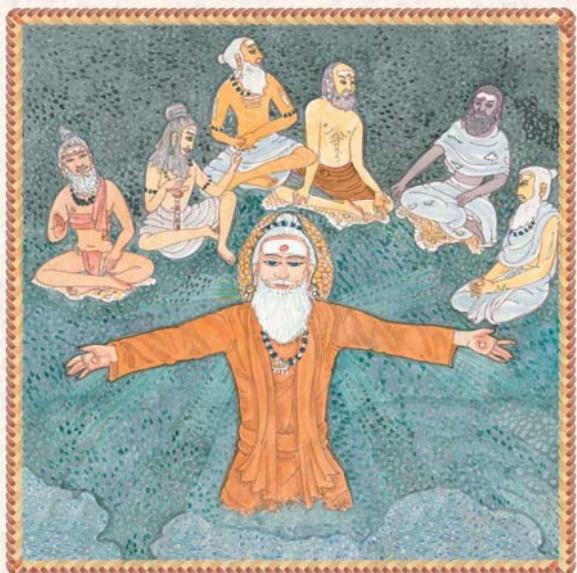


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By the Swamis of Kauai's Hindu Monastery



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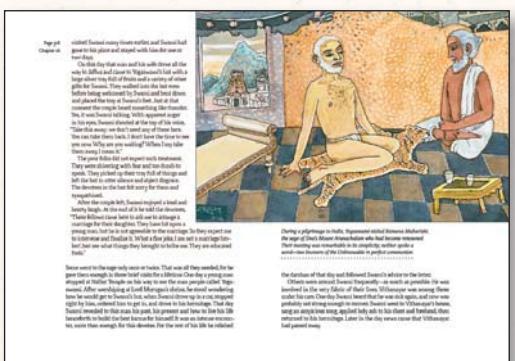
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Here is an adventure into the rarely divulged world of spiritual masters, full of extraordinary stories, insights and spiritual encounters. At its heart is the untold life of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, who founded HINDUISM TODAY, his guru Siva Yogaswami and five preceding masters of the spiritual lineage. Illustrated by the South Indian genius, S. Rajam.



FROM THE AGAMAS

How to Cook for God

Kamika Agama offers its best recipes for preparing temple naivedyam

The following is a lucid translation of passages from the Kamika Agama, chapter 6, verses 30 through 59, explaining the preparation of food offerings. The scriptural recipes, arguably the oldest recipes known to man, will be instantly familiar to anyone conversant with South Indian cooking.

THE SADHAKA SHOULD FILL A WATER-VESSEL WITH CLEAN, FILTERED water. With a purified vessel, he should wash the rice while reciting the *hrdaya* mantra. Having washed the rice six times, he should squeeze the grains repeatedly and once again wash them while reciting six *anga* mantras. He should then pour the grains into the clean water of the cooking vessel, knowing the exact quantity of water as guided by experience and through reasoning; or using one and a half times the measure of the grains. He should reverently bind darbha grass around the neck of the vessel.

The interior ground of the kitchen should be smeared with cow dung and sprinkled with consecrated water. With offerings of rice and the recitation of the *hrdaya* mantra, the sadhaka should worship the hearth, which has two projections at its top, representing dharma and adharma. While lifting the firewood and reciting the *vamadeva* mantra, he should place the wood inside the hearth, reciting the *hrdaya* mantra. After igniting the fire while reciting the *aghora* mantra, the sadhaka should kindle the fire with the recital of *ashtra* mantra. He should not use woods that are damaged by insects or spoiled by sparks of fire. Food which is burnt, over-boiled, cold, impaired by hair or insects or which is old and stale should be abandoned.

To prepare sweet rice, milk measured to twice the measure of rice, along with mung beans equal to half the measure of rice, should be boiled well. This dish is known as *payasa* (from *payas*, the mung bean).

Now, the details about *gulanna* (rice cooked with molasses). Having prepared the *payasa* as done before, the sadhaka should add the pieces of molasses at one part to four, then add ghee, which measure may be half or a quarter the measure of molasses. These should be cooked well and pieces of banana added. Sesame with a measure equal to half the measure of rice should be ground and added. If not available, half or quarter of this measure may be taken. The cooked rice mixed with sesame is called *krusaranna* (sesame rice).

Cooked rice mixed with powdered mung beans measuring half or a quarter of the rice is called *mudganna*. Or, all of these varieties of mixtures may be prepared according to the availability of needed ingredients. Pepper, turmeric powder, cumin seeds and mustard should be mixed well and cooked, then added to the cooked rice. This dish is known as *haridranna*.

The details about the main offerings have been shared. Now I will

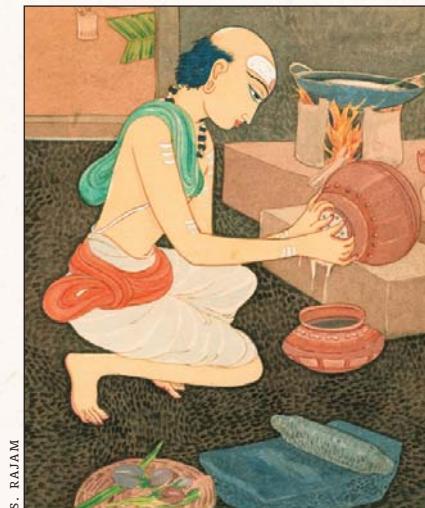
speak about the appetizing condiments and seasoned dishes. Mung beans, other legumes, mung beans and *rajam* (a kind of lentil) should be winnowed well and cleared of pods and broken or empty grains. Rajam and other lentils can be used with or without the skins. Pumpkin, gourd, jackfruit, bottle gourd, *kalinga* gourd, wild eggplant, cucumber and *karkari* (a type of eggplant) can be taken with or without the covering skins. Banana, *karakhi* (asafoetida), *vyaghri* (another type of eggplant), mango, melon, roots, bulbous roots and other edible roots are the recommended substances to be used for the preparation of appetizing dishes. For one measure of cooked rice, there should be one fourth measure of such other dishes.

All varieties of seasoned dishes should be fresh and pure, cooked well, free from all defects and should include ghee. They should be well mixed with ground coconut and other dry fruits and should be seasoned with pepper, cumin seeds and other spices. Such seasoned dishes are highly valued as the offerings of naivedya. They should have sufficient salt and ghee, and be seasoned with tamarind juice, pepper and other spices.

The measure of pepper should be 3 parts out of 4 parts of salt; that of clarified butter, twice the measure of pepper. The pounded beans should be one part of 16, or one part out of 32 parts the measure of rice. Pepper and other spices mixed into the form of paste, such as that of mustard and other juicy items, should be added to the dishes and boiled well.

Some of these dishes may be mixed with pieces of well-dressed sweet cakes. Having kneaded the powder of bean and pepper, the sadhaka should mix them with the dishes, slowly churn the mixture to make it soft, and cook it over mild fire. After adding sufficient molasses and pieces of juicy fruits, he should boil the soup. He may prepare many varieties of soups through different processes with suitable ingredients. Varieties of soups prepared in this way should be offered along with the pure, cooked rice.

Then the sadhaka should take the well-boiled dishes from the hearth with the accompaniment of the sounding conch and with the displays of honor, such as the parasol, light and others. He should arrange them over ground which has been smeared with cow-dung and decorated with five kinds of powder. He should drip warm ghee over the dishes with the recital of Siva mantras and then drip normal ghee with the recital of *anga* mantras and offer the oblations of ghee three times. He should purify the vessels and smear over them three stripes of vibhuti mixed with water.

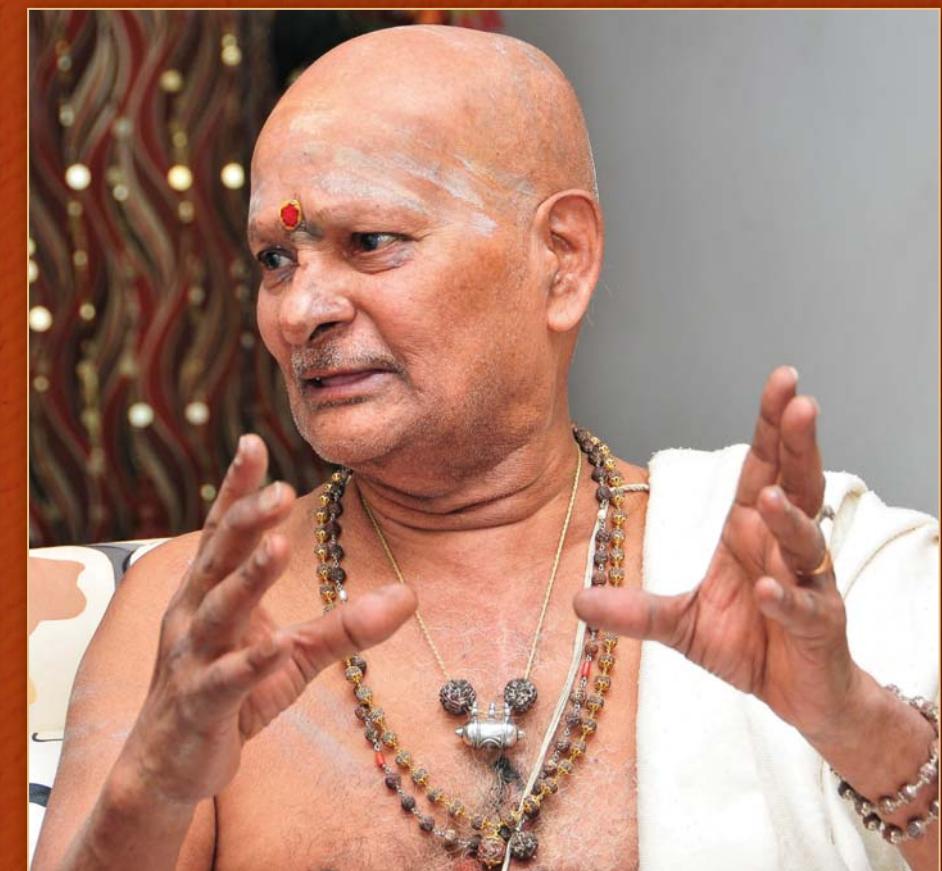


S. RAJAM
From the hearth: A devotee prepares naivedya for his daily worship

Dr. S. P. SABHARATHNAM SIVACHARYAR, of the Adi Siva priest lineage, is an expert in ancient Tamil and Sanskrit, specializing in the *Vedas*, *Agamas* and *Shilpa Shastras*. This excerpt is from his recent translation of the *Kamika Agama*.



ALL PHOTOS: VIJAY, RAAP'S STUDIO, WWW.RAAPSTUDIO.IN



(left) Sivasri Sadguru Dr. Kandukuri Sivananda Murthy Garu initiates a young Srouta Saiva lady into the sacred Panchakshara Mantra, whispering it in her right ear, and places a black stone Sivalingam into her hands; (above) The lingam is only five millimeters in height (the photo is much enlarged). The Lingadhari places this in a locket made of gold or silver, and then wears this around his or her neck, as we see on Mudigonda Virabhadra Rao above. This is worn twenty-four hours a day for the remainder of one's life.

Bound to Lord Siva for Life

How the small Srouta Saiva community of Andhra Pradesh sustains its ancient ways

SPECIAL FEATURE

THE ARADHYA BRAHMINS OF ANDHRA PRADESH CLAIM that the *Vedas*, the *Saiva Agamas* and many other Hindu scriptures deem the practice of lingadhara—the wearing of a Sivalingam on one's body and the daily worship of Lord Siva—to be the most exalted religious practice. They assure us that the faithful Lingadhar will absolutely attain moksha, liberation from rebirth. Calling themselves Srouta Saiva, or Vedic Saivites, they distinguish themselves from the modern-day reformist Lingayats and

Virasaivites of Karnataka, (who also wear the Sivalingam). They honor the original Vedic caste system and a 3,000-year-old Sanskritic tradition, stemming from the prehistoric Pashupata worship of Lord Siva, which dates all the way back to the *Rig Veda*. Our report covers the Aradhyas' high religious ceremonies during the holy month of Kartik and the annual lingadhara initiation, followed by interviews and a close-up look into the lives and hearts of these ardent votaries of Siva.



BY RAJIV MALIK, HYDERABAD

THE ARADHYA BRAHMIN COMMUNITY OF Andhra Pradesh comprises just a few thousand families. Their small numbers are belied by their staunch adherence to their ancient traditions. These Saivite Hindus steadfastly follow the discipline of Lingadhara-na, the practice of wearing a Sivalingam every hour of every day, from the time of initiation until death—a practice ordained in the *Vedas*, according to documents they showed us. They claim that most of our beloved Hindu Gods and Goddesses, including Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, Goddess Lakshmi and Goddess Saraswati, were all Lingadharis, bearers of the Sivalingam. In the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, those maharishis who wore the Sivalingam are the most revered of sages. If this practice is prescribed by scripture for ultimate liberation, one wonders why only some communities follow it.

Honoring Siva as Light

November 28, 2012, was Krittika Deepam, a festival of lights similar to Deepavali but with a more religious than social orientation. My hosts took me to the Kashi Vishveshwara Temple in Nagole, Hyderabad, one of the three main physical institutions under the Aradhyas'

umbrella organization, the Sri Saiva Maha Peetham (see www.srisaivamahapeetham.org). The temple was overflowing with Siva bhaktas. A traditional Vedic fire ceremony was in progress, with the chanting of mantras by Sivasri Dr. Attaluri Mrutyumjaya Sharma Garu and a team of half a dozen priests. Meanwhile, hundreds of elegantly and traditionally dressed women and girls of all ages were lighting lamps around the tall golden colored flagpole and throughout the temple. As darkness descended into night, the beauty and majesty of the lights unfolded in a completely breathtaking scene.

Ganarchana—Worship of a Lingadhari as Siva Himself

After the fire ceremony, the *ganarchana* of Sivasri Dr. Attaluri Mrutyumjaya Sharma Garu began. He is the community's Upa Peethadhipati, or secondary religious leader and successor to the head. Seated on a beautifully decorated dais in the peetham hall adjacent to the temple, Dr. Sharma was worshiped as an embodiment of Lord Siva Himself in a lengthy, elaborate puja. Devotees say every Lingadhari is entitled to such a puja: as a wearer of the Sivalingam, each is an *aradhy*,

one fit for worship. In practice, usually only elders serve in this role. It is as much an ordeal as an honor, since the *aradhy* must sit attentively for two hours. Afterwards Dr. Sharma exhorted the devotees to carry on their traditions and rituals with commitment and dedication.

Joyously Walking under Fire

The day culminated with another fire ceremony based on a story in which Lord Siva destroyed three cities where *rakshas*, demonic beings, were troubling the devas. Afterwards all the devas prayed to Lord Siva, lighting thousands of lamps to save Lord Siva from *drushti dosha* (the evil eye). The annual celebration commemorating this event is known as Jwala Thoranam. Outside the temple the devotees put up a line hung with hundreds of cotton strips. These were set alight, and the throngs of devotees walked under them.

Everyone was filled with joy, and the day closed with prasadam for all served until late at night. It is believed that all mortal beings who participate in this celebration on the full moon day in the month of Krittika are also saved from the evil eye and blessed with victory in all their endeavors.

Center of an Ancient Lineage

The next day we went back to the Saiva Peetham hall in Nagole for interviews. On the walls were pictures of a dozen past peethadhipatis stretching back 150 years. All were married men—Srouta Saivas consider married life to be a higher path than that of the celibate monk. Each of these family men was a great Sivayogi, and all are believed to have attained liberation.

Next we were off to the Sankaraardhya Matham in the heart of Hyderabad. Hanumanth Rao, secretary of the Sri Saiva Maha-peetham, explained, "There are only three institutions related to our sampradaya. One is the Kashi Vishveshwara Temple in Nagole, established in 2006. We have another branch at Vijaywada, and the third is this one-acre Saiva Matham here in Kavadiguda. It is dedicated to the great Sivayogi Mudigonda Sankara Rajya. He established the Saiva Maha Peetham in 1909 and attained Lingaichha (mahasamadhi) in 1920. His disciples interred his remains under a traditional Sivalingam samadhi shrine here at Kavadiguda. We also have branches across the state of Andhra Pradesh which do not hold proper-ty." For years maintenance of the math was

Holy Days of Krittika Deepam in Hyderabad

(Counter-clockwise from upper left) Kashi Vishveshwara Temple Rajagopuram with Ardhanarishwara (Half-Female Lord); Vedic fire ceremony; lighting lamps; the kodimaram or flag-pole area of the temple surrounded with devotees making offerings.





blocked by legal cases with tenants who claimed ownership of rented areas. Recently the Saiva Maha Peetham regained control of the entire area and now have grand plans to renovate and rebuild the math.

Beside the Linga-samadhi shrine is a Hanuman temple with a Hanuman statue that has been here from ancient times. In the Srouta Saiva pantheon, Lord Hanuman has a special place. Shri Hanumantha Rao said, "We have Lord Hanuman in our Siva temple in Nagole Peetham and here in our math also. Hanuman Ji has the spark of Siva in himself. Anjani Devi, the mother of Hanuman, bore him by Siva's grace. That is why we worship Lord Hanuman as a Saivite, even while Vaishnavites worship him as the devotee of Rama."

Lingadharana Diksha, Initiation Day

At 7:30 am on December 2 the Saiva Maha Peetham in Nagole was buzzing with activity. The all-important day of Sambhavi Diksha, Lingadharana initiations, had arrived, one of several held annually. Each year about 150

devotees become Lingadharis.

The peetham was packed with the candidates, their relatives and all the organizing elders and priests. After officially registering, the candidates sat in the front rows. Most were young men and women; some were teenage boys. Peethadhipati Sivasri Sadguru Dr. Kandukuri Sivananda Murthy Garu, the reigning head of Srouta Saivism, arrived and took his seat at the front of the hall. Guided by the priests, the candidates performed the sankalpa (opening rituals) together. Priests sprinkled them all with holy ash and placed a small auspicious piece of dry cowdung on their heads. The priests had prepared an elaborate mandala of colored grains and kumbha pots on a platform. The Upa Peethadhipati blessed the tiny Sivalingas. The hall resounded with Sanskrit chanting and the air was full of sacred ash that now almost completely covered the candidates. The whole atmosphere was spiritually charged.

The candidates waited in a meditative mood until they were called. Each one in

turn stepped behind a huge cloth which provided privacy as the Peethadhipati gave each candidate their Sivalinga and infused the Panchakshara Mantra, "Aum Namah Sivaya," with instructions into the right ear. This sacred practice of diksha, initiation—the passage of the spiritual spark and responsibility from lineage holder to disciple—has carried Hinduism forward through the millennia. Two hours later, sixty new Lingadharis emerged, feeling blessed with the opportunity and the authority to worship Lord Siva daily.

The Power of Aradhyas, Daily Puja

A most impressive theme was unfolding. Here is a community of men and women, young and old, even teenagers, who were committed to a 24-hour practice, the wearing of the Sivalingam for the rest of their lives with full faith that, if they perform their sadhana as prescribed, their freedom from reincarnation was guaranteed. Though all Hindus agree that the deepest purpose of human birth is moksha, liberation from re-

incarnation, today it is rare to find even a few Hindus, even among the devout, actually focused on this goal. But here is an entire community! Even in religious communities it is becoming increasingly rare to find the youth devoted to spiritual practice.

After the ceremony, I interviewed Peethadhipati Sivasri Sadguru Dr. Kandukuri Sivananda Murthy Garu. He answered all my questions with ease and humor. The most magical moment came when I probed who is entitled to have the Lingadharana Diksha. He told me anyone who is keen and willing to follow the discipline is entitled to receive this diksha, as the Vedas are for one and all—not only all of humanity, but even the animal kingdom.

Placing a rudraksha mala around my neck, he told me I had been given rudraksha diksha by him, which made me a part of the wonderful and chosen Srouta Saiva community. Feeling blessed, I blissfully started to dream of my own liberation from rebirth.



(top) bathing of the feet of the Lingadhari; (opposite) devotees perform Ganarchana, worship of a Lingadhari (here, Sivasri Dr. Attaluri Mrutyumjaya Sharma Garu) as Lord Siva himself; (below) devotees set ablaze cotton strips hanging on a line, then joyously walk underneath the fire to avert the evil eye and invoke protection and grace

Worship of Siva in the Devotee and Averting the Evil Eye



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ALL PHOTOS: RAAP'S STUDIO, WWW.RAAPSTUDIO.IN

(clockwise from top left) Couples doing the sankalpa: declaration of time, place and intention; young boy covered in sacred ash awaits his turn; small Lingas, crystal for men, black stone for women; Candidates are blessed and purified in preparation for initiation; (opposite) Peethadhipati prepares to give diksha; (inset) Eleven-year-old Shreyas receiving his lingam

What Is Lingadharana Initiation?

A.V.S.R. CHANDRASEKHAR, describes the ancient Lingadharana initiation ceremony, known as Shambhava Diksha:

The same ceremonies that are used to install a Linga in a temple—such as *jaladivasam*, *danyadivasam*, *homa* etc.—are followed here to worship all the small Lingas collectively. Nine grains, four Lingas, five forms of Lord Siva and the water vessels, are all laid out. Twelve acharyas are invited to help with the chanting. Through chanting of the Vedic mantras, all the ten ganas, the guardians who always accompany Lord Siva, are invited one by one. Nandi the bull is also invited. All the family devas are invited. The entire puja and chanting are done as stated in our *Agama Shastras*. To explain

in simple terms: if a king is coming, then all his ministers and family are also invited and arrangements made to receive them. Similarly when we are calling Lord Siva or Ishwaram, He comes with His entourage, and they remain present here in the water vessels.

Then there will be the *prana pratishtha* mantra to awaken the spiritual power in the Lingas, just as you would do when installing a new image in a temple. Finally the guru performs the puja. Once the program is complete, the ganas will be asked to leave. The charged and consecrated Lingas will later be presented to the Lingadharana Diksha seekers to install on their bodies. The body of the initiate becomes a temple.

Every day you try to improve



concentration on your puja. Srouta Saiva philosophy does not say that you must do a long, vigorous spiritual practice from day one. The *laghu* puja is only fifteen minutes. Penance is a continuous process. Shambhava Diksha is a lifetime affair. As age advances, the Lingadhar

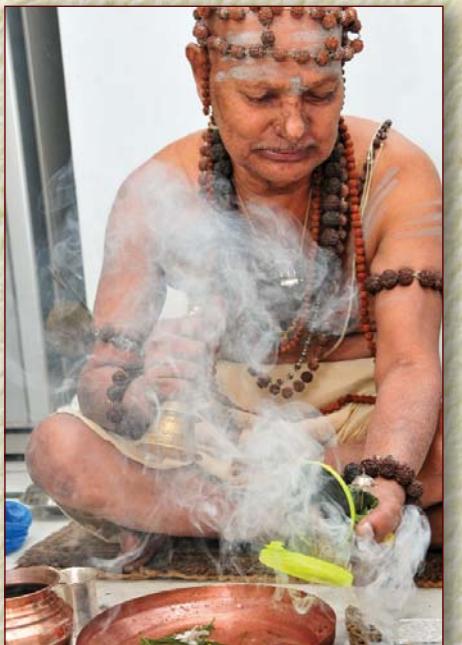
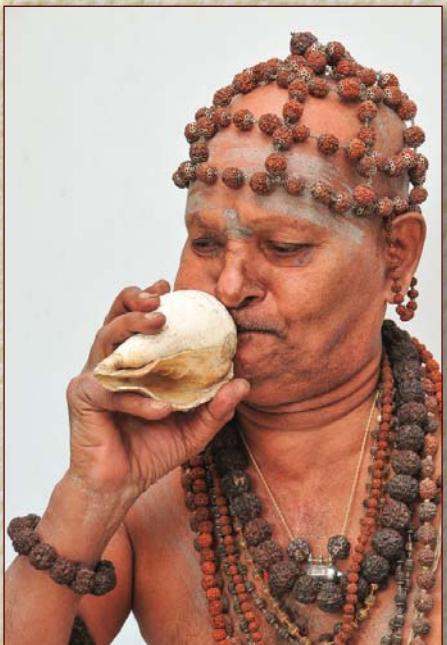
Saiva publisher: Shri A.V.S.R. Chandrasekhar, along with his brother, Shri A.G. Krishnaprasad, manages the *Sivajnanalohari* Trust established by his father to propagate Srouta Saivism in English in books and on the Internet.

concentrates more and more on sadhana and puja. The maha puja may last three hours, which ultimately leads to salvation.

Siva has two forms: human form and Linga rupam. The entire cosmos is there in the Linga rupam, the divine aniconic form. Lingadharis feel that worship of the Linga rupam is the highest worship, through which you will eventually get the *sakshatkaram*/vision of Siva in human form and hence salvation. That is the process. In the *Vedas*, the *sakshatkaram* of Siva is mentioned as difficult but not impossible to attain.

Taking God's Emblem, the Ishta Linga, to the Heart for a Lifetime of Worship





Communing with God Daily

ON THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 1, we visited the home of 74-year-old Mudigonda Virabhadra Rao, a retired teacher and senior Srouta Saiva. While young, busy Lingadharis may complete their

daily puja in as little as fifteen minutes, the goal is to increase this time as one matures through life. Virabhadraji's puja lasted several hours. First he donned rudraksha beads and holy ash. He removed the Lingam from the

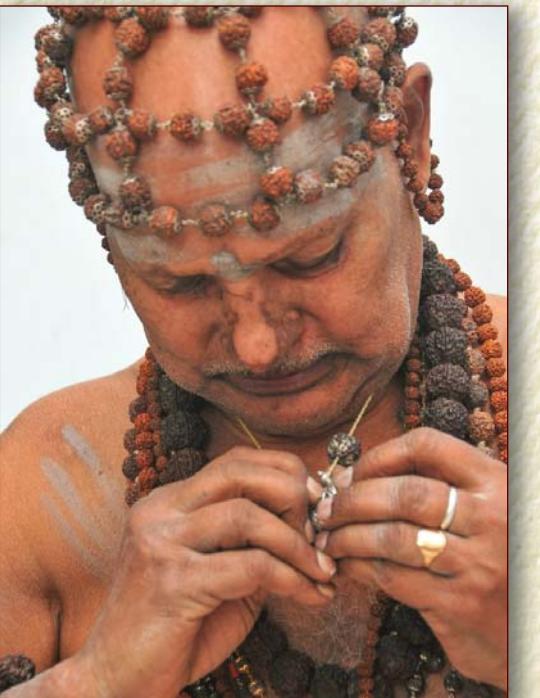
locket around his neck and placed it in his left hand. He proceeded to do the most amazing, elaborate and methodical personal worship I have ever witnessed. All the while, his wife was by his side assisting, handing him one by one the large number of small instruments and puja materials he needed for the dozen or more offer-

ings. He chanted Sanskrit from the Vedas and Agamas throughout. After concluding the puja, he proceeded to do a traditional Vedic fire ceremony. Later he confided that through the Siva puja he is able to communicate with God on a one-to-one basis and that he has a very friendly, personal relationship with Lord Siva.

"You have to realize that the same Lord is in your heart, too. It is through the Lord in one's heart that one can reach the Brahmanadi that is there in one's head. The moment one is connected to Brahmanadi, salvation is assured."

—Dr. Mrutyunjaya Sharma

(top, left to right) The tiny Sivalingam is placed in the left hand; bathing with water; applying sandalwood paste to the Lingam and his special Nandi ring that he rolls over to face Siva; conch sound offering; incense offering; (bottom, left to right) arati lamp offering to Siva decorated with bilva and flowers with umbrella and mirror in place; holding to third eye and surrendering heart and mind to Siva; and the couple performs a complete fire ceremony; restoring the Lingam to its locket





Voices of the Elders

Sivasri Sadguru Dr. Kandukuri Sivannanda Murthy Garu, 86, Peethadhipati, Saiva Maha Peetham. "We are known as Srouta Saiva. *Srouta* means in accordance with shruti, which are the *Vedas*. We adhere strictly to the *Vedas* and allied scriptures. We can call this Vedic Saivism. There is non-Vedic Saivism as well. The Lingayats and present-day Virasaivites of Karnataka, for example, also wear the Sivalingam, but they do not accept the authority of the *Vedas*. The Saivism of Karnataka rejects the caste system of the *Vedas*. They make no differences between castes. Members of our community respect and observe differences between the castes, varna dharma, as described in the *Vedas*. We will give Siva mantra diksha and the Sivalingam to anyone, even Dalits and so-called untouchables. But when we initiate someone of a different caste, they receive a different ceremony and a different kind of Sivalingam. Similarly, with vegetarianism, it goes with the caste. A sudra who is initiated

may wear the Linga and be non-vegetarian. If you are a brahmin Lingadhari, you must be a vegetarian.

"We are not followers of any person. We follow the shastras, our scriptures. There are many other paths leading to salvation, like rivers going towards the sea. The goal is the same—Siva—and that is why we pray to Siva. But Srouta Saiva does say that your liberation is guaranteed in this path, while you are not necessarily guaranteed salvation in the other paths. We are not proselytizing Srouta Saivism. We do not call people and say, 'Take to Saivism, it is so great and others are bad.' We never talk like that. Our path is different. It is all voluntary acceptance. One American couple came. We did not invite them or proselytize them. It was their choice and we gave them initiation.

"My message to all those who take initiation is to keep the panchakshara maha-mantra, Aum Namah Sivaya, in your mind all the time. That is the only teaching I give. Every

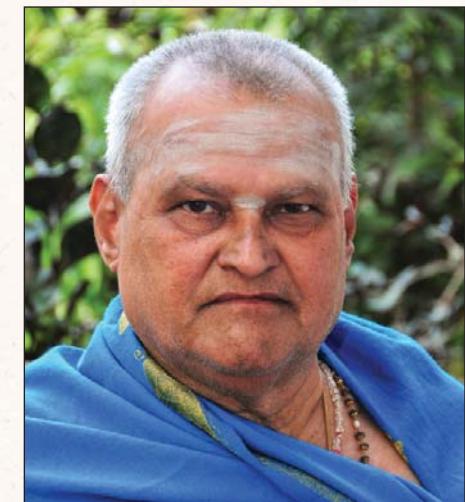


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human being really knows what is good and what is bad. To tell a lie, to harm somebody is bad. Do we need to tell this to anybody? Everyone knows what the general, essential good conduct of human beings should be. But though dharma is known, they may not follow it. Human beings are free. Everything is ordained by God."

Sivasri Dr. Attaluri Mrutyumjaya Sharma Garu, 68, Upa Peethadhipati, Saiva Maha Peetham: "Without the blessings of Lord Siva, nothing is possible. Even with initiation, if the grace of Lord Siva is not there, Siva puja is not possible. The Lingadharana Diksha can be given only after the boy has received the upanayana samskara (sacred thread ceremony). As prescribed by the *Vedas*, for brahmins the age is eight years, vaishyas eleven years and for kshatriyas it is twelve years. The *Vedas* do not prescribe upanayana samskara for a sudra. But if Lord Siva's grace is there, a sudra can also receive the Lingadharana Diksha after receiving upanayana samskara, Gayatri Mantra Diksha and the necessary purification. *Agamas* clearly say that a girl must first be married to a Lingadhari. Only then can she receive Lingadharana Diksha.

"Once you are a Lingadhari, you are a Lingadhari at all times. The Linga can never be separated from our body. You cannot keep it somewhere else. Virasaivas of ancient times who lost their Linga would commit suicide. It was taken as if the existence of that person was over. They were that drunk with



Siva bhakti.

"Modern Virasaivism and the Lingayats of Karnataka are the branches, Srouta Saiva Sampradaya is the tree. We follow the *Vedas*; they do not. But the caste system practiced today in India is not the old *varnashrama* system given in the *Vedas*. All these four varnas or types of people

are necessary for the well-being of society. Brahmins guide society and kshatriyas defend it. These are essential occupations for a vibrant, thriving, living society. According to Manu, all the four types of people were equal. There is no greatness or smallness. If in the course of time the brahmins started looking down upon the workers/sudras, that was an aberration.

We initiate Dalits and untouchables if they want Lingadharana Diksha. The concept of untouchability is being misused by present-day politicians. Untouchability is nothing but an individual's perception. If a woman has bathed but her children have not, she will treat her children as untouchable. We even accept converts to Hinduism. Srinath Mahadevan and his wife are examples (see page 32). If someone joins us mid-stream, we first perform the requisite sixteen samskaras in a nutshell form, and then a *shuddhi* (purification). Then the process is the same, upanayanam and Lingadharana initiation. Now, Srinath is not just a Hindu; among the Hindus he is an aradhy, a Srouta Saiva.

The requisite qualification for a person

Lingadharis talk about their initiation, daily worship and life as a devotee

Nagendra Nath, 29, chartered accountant: "We face a problem of conversion to Christianity and Islam, so we need to educate our people about our traditions. I took Lingadharana Diksha at the age of 16. Even as a child I did puja and memorized all 185 verses of Lalita Sahasranama. By the age of ten I could also chant many other shlokas. I studied in Saraswati Vidyayalam, which was run by the Theosophical Society and RSS. All this had an impact on me."



Raga Ranjita, 24, MBA graduate, Nagendra's wife, homemaker and mother: "Today I will be given Lingadharana Diksha. It is nice to see so many young people here to get Lingadharana Diksha. Some kind of divine spirit enters inside one if one does the abhishekam of the Lingam every day."



Vasantha Kumar, software engineer: "I have been a Lingadhari for twelve years. Before initiation my life was undisciplined. With my initiation, a

new power came to me. I started getting up early and performing puja before sunrise. All the young people who have taken the Lingadharana Diksha experience changes in their lives."



Sharda, 70, educated to tenth standard, full-time mother and housewife: "I have been doing normal pujas till now. My son took Lingadharana Diksha when my husband passed away. Now, late in life, I have developed interest in the tradition.

I want to merge into Siva when I pass away. Therefore I have taken the path of Lingadharana today."

Uma Kasinathini, 40, postgraduate in Public Administration, exams trainer: "I do Siva puja every morning for half an hour. I have never missed my puja since my initiation after marriage in 2000."

"The mother's role in spreading our tradition is more important than the father's, because she has the most contact with the child. Without her, the tradition cannot endure. I have seen families of aradhyas who are living like ordinary people, not wearing and worshiping the Linga. In such cases, I feel it is the women who are not doing their jobs. If the

father is very busy, the mother must play a leading role. Some people say they will perform their religious duties once they get older. But my father taught us Siva puja is an integral part of your life, just like eating."

"I carry Lord Siva on my body. He is the guiding force, helps me lead a disciplined life and He does not let me do anything wrong. The Lingam gives me solace, and I converse with God when I am down."



Vijay Prakasham, retired mining engineer: "I am so happy that my grandson Shreyas has got his Lingadharana Diksha today. I was initiated 52 years ago, in 1962. Lingadharana protects you in every respect. Someone Whom we cannot see but is the power behind us, protects us. In my life, the days when I could not do abhishekam of my Linga were days with problems. But whenever I performed my abhishekam, my days were trouble free."

Sasidhar Mudigonda, 36, computer professional: "The community is changing. We are more focused on our religion. Youth are getting attracted to our culture and temples. My message to the Hindu youth, based on my personal experience is: after a morn-

ing bath, just spending ten to fifteen minutes on Siva abhishekam will give you relaxation and many other positive results.

"Much is said about the negatives of IT, bad work hours and time challenges, etc. But there are now so many divine websites and positives in the Internet culture. If we do our Siva puja and meditate for fifteen minutes when we get home from work, that will give us a lot of self-confidence. If we cannot even spend 15 minutes, even two minutes' chanting Aum Namah Sivaya will give us relief from stress. We must also reserve more time for our families."



Shreyas, 11, student, fifth standard: "I got my upanayanam samskara at age eight, and today I got the Lingadharana Diksha. My father and grandfather have been doing Siva puja every day, and now I will also for ten or fifteen minutes daily. Linga puja every day will make me a better student."

S. Ramchandra Prasad, 47, advocate: "We do abhishekam to the Linga with the sacred water. Water becomes sacred when it is mixed with holy ash. We are always elated that the omnipotent Lord Siva is there in the Linga we wear on our body and He safeguards us. I would like to tell Hindus all over

the world to have a firm belief in the existence of God. To Hindus, Lord Siva is omnipotent, the ultimate power. I am not making any distinctions between Lord Siva and other Gods, as all other forms are also the manifestations of Lord Siva only."



Janahvi, 13, daughter of Chandrasekhar, student, ninth standard: "My grandparents were Lingadharis and so are my parents. When I was a small child, my grandfather would tell me stories of Lord Siva. I recite Siva Panchakshari every day and chant the names of Lord Siva. I dream of being initiated as a Lingadhari when I marry. Aradhy families train their children from childhood so we are prepared for Lingadharana when we reach that stage."



"My friends at school are very interested in the traditions of my community. They tell about their traditions and I share mine. I tell my friends about Panchakshari, Siva puja, holy ash and rudraksha. My message

for the youth is: obey your parents and follow the traditions of the community. Go for Lingadharana and upanayanam. Tell everybody about the importance of wearing the Sivalingam."

Sivalenka Anuradha, 43, practicing chartered accountant: "As children we would help our father in the daily puja however we could. Immediately after getting up we would wash our face and apply vibhuti, pluck flowers, clean the puja room and put out the mat, then bath and attend the puja. I do my Siva puja daily with my husband at almost the same time each day. I provide everything he needs so that we do not have to interrupt the puja for anything. We spend roughly ten to fifteen minutes on the puja. Women have a short Siva puja format. Men do a longer puja and also chant the Gayatri."



"My father introduced me to Namah Sivaya even before I could read or write. This mantra always rings in our mind. Anything we do or start, we do it chanting Namah Sivaya. No matter where we roam, we have Lord Siva with us on our chest all day and all night. I have no worries and no depression at all."



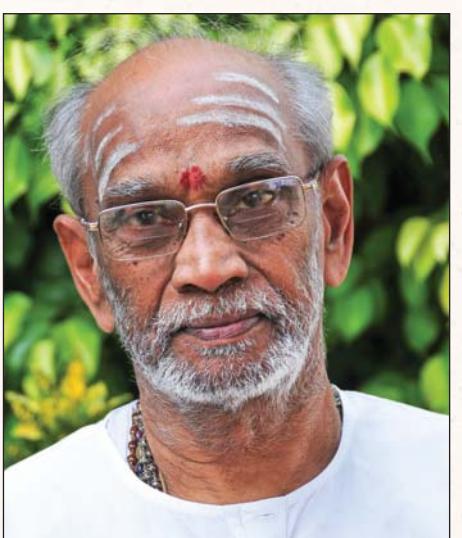
like Srinath—our expectation for any Lingadharis—is that he must be committed to perform Siva puja daily. There is laghu, or small puja, which can be done in fifteen minutes; and there is maha puja, that takes three hours. One chooses whatever suits one's lifestyle. But whatever you do, you must do consistently. As one grows older, one should devote more and more time to puja. Gradually, one has to realize that wearing the Linga is only a means and not an end in itself. Once you are accustomed to worshiping the Linga on your body, you have to realize that the same Lord is in your heart, too. It is through the Lord in one's heart that one can reach the Brahmanadi that is there in one's head. The moment one is connected to Brahmanadi, salvation is assured.

"We encourage arranged marriages. In our community 99 percent of marriages are arranged. Our youth accept this system. Love marriages also take place, but rarely. Inter-caste marriages are not approved. A brahmin should not marry a vaishya or a sudra or a kshatriya. But if a brahmin marries a sudra girl, on principle we would not approve, however there is no thought of making them outcasts. Once it is done, we cannot undo it, so it has to be accepted. We provide her Lingadharana and take her into our fold.

Sri Mulugu Hanumanth Rao, 76, Secretary, Saiva Maha Peetham: "About five thousand families practice the Srouta Saiva traditions. Globally it might be about thirty thousand people. The majority are in Andhra Pradesh; only a very few are outside India. If you include those who only took rudraksha or mantra diksha, there could be a few thousand more. As far as activities go, besides the annual festivals, ceremonies and initiations, we recently initiated some social projects to provide financial and medical assistance to help those in our community who are having economic difficulties. We have started an ashram at the ancient Siva temple of Sri-sailam and hope to develop a branch there. Each month we publish the *Saiva Mataha Prabodhini* magazine to keep everyone informed. Also we are printing and distributing books on our system and theology.

"Women are as important as males in our community. The family traditions are passed on primarily by the women in the home while raising the children. In a way, they are more important than the men for us to keep our dharma alive and pass it on to the future generations."

T. Viramallayya, 65, environmental journalist, Vice President, Saiva Maha Peetham, Twin Cities Branch: "Ours is a rational Vedic culture. Our scriptures state that Rudra, or Siva, is the most ancient God. Siva is the only God. There is no other God than Siva. We



Secretary: *Mulugu Hanumanth Rao, Secretary of Saiva Maha Peetham, Hyderabad*

liberalized all our rituals and systems. Our system is very easy to adopt. I say we are liberal because we do not have so many rituals. Siva is Abhishek Priya, one who loves to be bathed; water would suffice. For Siva, you do not have to perform so many rituals. If you can do puja with flowers and fruits, then that is good. But if you cannot, you can even just do puja mentally. That is called *manas puja*, puja in the mind.

"Scriptures say a Lingadharis is always purified. This means a man who wears Linga is himself an embodiment of Siva. I believe only in Lord Siva, considering Him the supreme power. In my house I only allow pictures of

Lord Siva and Mother Parvati and of no other Deities or Gods. Though I am cosmopolitan in my approach, at the same time I observe all the rituals meticulously. In the morning I get up around 5 and spend two hours doing my Siva puja. Even on an airplane flight I do not miss my puja; I do *manas puja*."

Mudigonda Amarnatha Sharma 44, Sanskrit scholar and lecturer, *Agama* expert, Asthana Pandith and matrimonial priest: "The proof of Lingadharana is there in four *Vedas*. The *Narayana Upanishad* states, 'May I wear the Lingam on my body for salvation from rebirth.' There are 28 *Agamas*. Srouta Saiva Siddhanta is based primarily on the *Chandragyana*, *Karanottara* and *Makatottara Agamas*. *Chandragyana Agama* states that you have to wear the Lingam on your body. The *Mahabharata* states that all the Pandavas, Sri Krishna and Arjuna were Lingadharis. Upamanu Maharishi gave diksha to the son of Lord Krishna. Pashupati Diksha, Shambhava Diksha, Shiro Diksha—these are all synonyms of Lingadharana. The *Siva Gita* says that even Lord Rama was a Lingadharis and had taken the Pashupati Vratam (Vow).

"The *Agamas* followed by Sivacharyas of Tamil Nadu and Srouta Saiva are one and the same. They take the rudraksha dharana, bhasma dharana and mantra upadesha. But they do not follow Lingadharana.

"There were twelve revered aradhyas who propagated our Srouta Saivism, and 63 Nayansars propagated Saivism in Tamil Nadu. However, to the best of my knowledge, there is no link between the two lineages."



Srouta Saiva scholar and priest: *Mudigonda Amarnatha Sharma*

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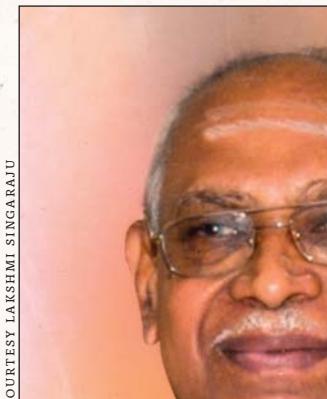
Dedicated to Siva's Message

BY LAKSHMI SINGARAJU

MY FATHER, SIVA SRI ANNADEVARA SUBBARAO Garu, was born in an orthodox brahmin family in a small hamlet in West Godavari district of AP. He underwent the Lingadharana initiation and devoted his entire life to the worship of Lord Siva, diligently performing all his duties as a family man and as a Siva devotee. His life was an example of one who strived for kaivalyam, liberation. All his conversations revolved around Srouta Saivism and the worship of Siva. He often compared himself with Nandi, Lord Siva's vehicle, saying his duty was to serve the Lord just as Nandi did.

Our parents raised six children with strict discipline. Each of us had daily chores. The day began with house cleaning, picking flowers and preparing puja articles. My mother cooked the food offerings. My father had to finish his Siva puja, eat and leave for work by 9:30am. By then my brothers had to finish their Sandhyavandanam and Gayatri, and my three sisters and I had to finish reciting our Lalita Sahasranama. This was a strict rule, and we followed it regularly. All eight of us always sat together for dinner, sharing our experiences of the day. Weekends were more relaxed, and Dad spent more time with us. He cherished analyzing the great texts, linking them to his devotion to Lord Siva. He would get so enthused talking to us of Siva that my mother had to remind him to complete his puja.

My father was a voracious reader, especially of works about Saiva Siddhanta and the works of Siva Sri Nagalingasastry Garu. He once took me on a two-hour ride to an old library in Chennai. Why, I did not know. Later, after going through his life work, I came to understand his zealous striving for a broad comprehension of Saiva



Father & guru: *Siva Sri Annadevara Subbarao garu; below, his daughter Lakshmi, author of this article*

The aradhy community is so small that many of our young ladies have to marry outside the faith, but Dad was determined to marry all four of his daughters into aradhy families so we could continue to practice our religion. I live in the US and perform puja to my Sivalingam every day. I am fortunate to have been born as his daughter. I am forever indebted to him, as he gave me a chance to practice Srouta Saivism.



Siddhanta from different sources. He used to say that only with Lord Siva's grace could one eventually understand the texts.

After retirement he devoted himself to translating the works of Sivasri Nagalingasastry Garu into English. Despite his meager finances, he established a trust called Sivajnanalahari, published books on Srouta Saiva Siddhanta and created a website, www.sroutasaivasiddhanta.com, putting the tenets of our faith into simple, plain English to make it accessible to seekers all over the world. He said future generations will not have the time to read complex books, especially not in Sanskrit or old Telugu. He felt that even if a single person was influenced by his effort, his purpose would be fulfilled. His two sons are devotedly carrying on his work. Within weeks after my father passed, one Mr. Sriram called from Chennai. To our family's delight, he said that having gone through the website, he wanted to receive Sambhava Diksha. Then in 2011 Mr. Srinatha Mahadevan and his wife, Shankari, discovered the site and later became the first Westerners to convert to Srouta Saivism.

My dad is my guru; he bestowed me with the Sambhava Diksha.

Two Americans Find Truth

MARK SAUNDERS, BORN IN 1978, WAS RAISED IN TEXAS. BUT his thirst for truth could not be quenched in America. He started a business importing goods from India. That nation became his home. Out of love for Lord Siva he took the name Srinath Mahadevan. He and his wife, Shankari, were the initial spark for this feature story. "Though US born," he says, "I grew up from the age of nine in Sanatana Dharma, originally as a Smarta. I studied Shankaracharya's work. As I delved deeper, I could not ignore the overlaying message of Siva Manasa Puja and Sivananda Lahiri and so many more things in the *Shastras*, in all the *Itihasas*. All these things pointed with no doubt directly to the greatness of the Saiva path. When I first came to India 14 years ago, I left the Smarta Sampradaya and joined the Gorakhnath Sampradaya. A year ago I made the decision to leave the Gorakhnath tradition, due to the current decline in orthodoxy, the high rate of illiteracy of most members and the lack of knowledge of *Agama Shastra* and *shruti*. I prayed very hard to Lord Shankar to guide me on the correct path. With great astonishment I came to find a community in Andhra that Indologists have said no longer exists. The followers of Lakulisa Acharya, the Aradhy Brahmins, are alive and well in Andhra, and by the blessing of Mahadev I and my wife are the first non-Indians given Lingadharana initiation in this community. I feel it is my duty and a seva to my guru and lineage to help bring our tradition to the global readers of your esteemed magazine."



Initiates: *Srinath Mahadevan and Shankari in Rajasthan*



SHUTTERSTOCK

L I N E A G E

The Beliefs, Practices and Path to Liberation in the Srouta Saiva Tradition

THE SROUTA SAIVITES TRACE THEIR caste lineage to the rishis who first received the *Vedas* from God Siva, each of whom was the progenitor of a specific gotra, or family group. All brahmin castes similarly regard themselves as descendants of one of these rishis. These gotras form a grihastha tradition in which the teachings flow from father to son, mother to daughter. Thus, the tradition has been passed on for centuries in unbroken continuity.

Historically, twelve teachers among the Srouta Saivites are revered above all others. They are the twelve *aradhyas*, those "fit to be worshiped," holy teachers considered to be above even the brahminical caste itself. Born with full awareness of Siva consciousness, they propagated devotion to Lord Siva and taught the Sivadvaita philosophy. Today, male descendants of these aradhyas may act as initiating gurus.

The foremost saint of this tradition is Badarayana, author of the *Brahma Sutras*, 550 pithy verses which encapsulate the *Upa-*

nishads, explaining the nature of God, the status of the world and the individual self. Badarayana's work is a fundamental to all schools of Vedanta.

The next most significant teacher was Nilakantha Sivacharya, also known as Srikantha, said to have been born in 3100 BCE in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. His com-

"Siva creates the world and all souls. As Shakti, Siva is also the material cause of the world. We are part of the body of God."

mentary on Badarayana's *Brahma Sutras*, the *Nilakantha Bhashyam*, forms the basis for the philosophy of Siva Vishishtadvaita, or, more simply, Sivadvaita. This philosophy, also called Srouta Saiva Siddhanta, regards both the *Vedas* and the *Saiva Agamas* as revealed scripture.

Historical evidence for the lineage can be traced back to the 11th century ce, with the

most important modern exponent being Sivayogi Mudigonda Nagalinga Shastri (1876-1948). As a young man, he studied in Tamil Nadu with Sri Srinivasa Shastrigal, who gave him a palm leaf copy of *Nilakantha Bhashyam*, calling it the oldest and most authoritative commentary on Saiva Siddhanta. With his prodigious pen, he consolidated and restated the tradition in over 100 books.

A second key figure, Mudigonda Sankararadhyula (1851-1924), founded the Saiva Maha Sabha in 1904, a formal institution representing the community. It became Saiva Maha Peetham in 1941. Its current head is Sivasri Sadguru Dr. Kandukuri Sivananda Murthy Garu.

The Srouta community is not a movement, nor does it seek expansion. In fact, it has remained so insulated that few inside or outside of India know of the existence of this important living Sivadvaita tradition. But thanks to the website by Siva Sri Annadevara Subbarao, www.sroutasaivasiddhanta.com, and his translation of their books into English, the days of Srouta Saivism's being hidden are gone.

Sadasiva: The highest visible manifestation of God in the Saiva Agamas is Sadasiva, also called Pancha Brahma, the five-faced Lord of creation, preservation, dissolution, obscuration and revealment. He is invoked during Siva puja and visions of Him are sought for by devotees.

God, Soul and World

The core Srouta theological tenets can be summarized as follows. Siva is God, Rudra, the Parabrahma of the *Vedas* and the creator (efficient cause) of the world. As Shakti, He is also the material cause of the world. All souls, too, are Siva's creation. God, souls and the world are eternal entities. The multiplicity of form and beings is real and not just an appearance. From Siva's point of view, it is all One. It is Himself. He is the tree of life, and also that which is beyond the tree. One Srouta analogy says, to Lord Siva, souls are like fingers are to your hand. We are part of the body of God.

Srouta Saiva Siddhanta acknowledges the pan-Hindu view of the cycles of manifestation. All form emanates from Siva, and all form will dissolve back into Him at the time of the Great Dissolution, *mahapralaya*. Souls continue to exist after *mahapralaya*, but in subtle form, emerging once again in the next cycle of manifestation.

Siva is regarded as having two forms. The *murta/saguna*, personal form of God is Siva/Shakti, known as Ardhanarishwara, "Half Female Lord." Following the *Saiva Agamas*, this supreme personal form is also called Parameshwara, which manifests Sadasiva, the Five-Faced Lord from whom all beings and creation arise. The *amurta/nirguna*, formless Siva, is represented by the Sivalingam.

Dear to Srouta Saivites is the Vedic teaching describing the process of *anupravesham*. Each of us has a vacant space at the top of the heart. This space corresponds to the cosmic heart of Siva, known as *daharaksham* or *chidambaram*, the "sky/space of consciousness." Upon incarnation, the karma-laden soul enters this space with Lord Siva. Therein, Siva acts like a mother, helping the soul fructify its karmas and progress toward liberation.

Personal Practice

Srouta Saivites adhere closely to Vedic prescriptions. These include practice of Gayatri japa, following the rules for one's particular caste, fulfilling the 18 ritual sacraments (*samskaras*) that consecrate life's milestones, and the ritual honoring of one's ancestors.

Practice includes general guidelines for conduct, such as being truthful, keeping purity (which includes observing rules of untouchability during death and birth periods), straightforwardness, seeing the world as God's gift, being celibate before mar-

riage and after marriage being faithful to one's spouse. During the month of Krittika and on Mahasivaratri, food is taken once a day only. Adherents are urged to follow the *shastras* and teachings of their lineage with determination.

Lingadharana initiation is to be received at an early age. Recitation of *Aum Namah Sivaya* and Sri Rudram chanting are central. Siva is ardently worshiped in the Linga around one's neck, in the Linga in the heart and as the Linga that is the cosmos. Stress is placed on wearing rudraksha beads, holy ash and performing puja daily.

Stages of Unfoldment

As one develops a strong desire for liberation, there comes a natural intensification of spiritual practice, including daily puja, offer-

ings and *Aum Namah Sivaya* japa. Eventually, gaining a deep understanding of God Siva, one enters into *nirikshana*, a state of yearning for a vision of Lord Siva.

Upon death, the goal is to direct the life forces from the heart through the *Brahmanadi*, the spiritual nerve current that runs to and through the top of the head. Leaving the body in this manner, one enters high spiritual inner realms, bathing in the *Viraja* river and joining Siva in the heaven world. Thereafter, the soul evolves through the final states of exaltation as given in the *Saiva Agamas*: 1) *salokyam*—abiding in Siva's inner world of Kailasam; 2) *samipyam*, being near God Siva; 3) *sarupyam*—attaining the same form as Siva and, finally; 4) *sayujyam*, becoming one with Him and viewing creation through His eyes.

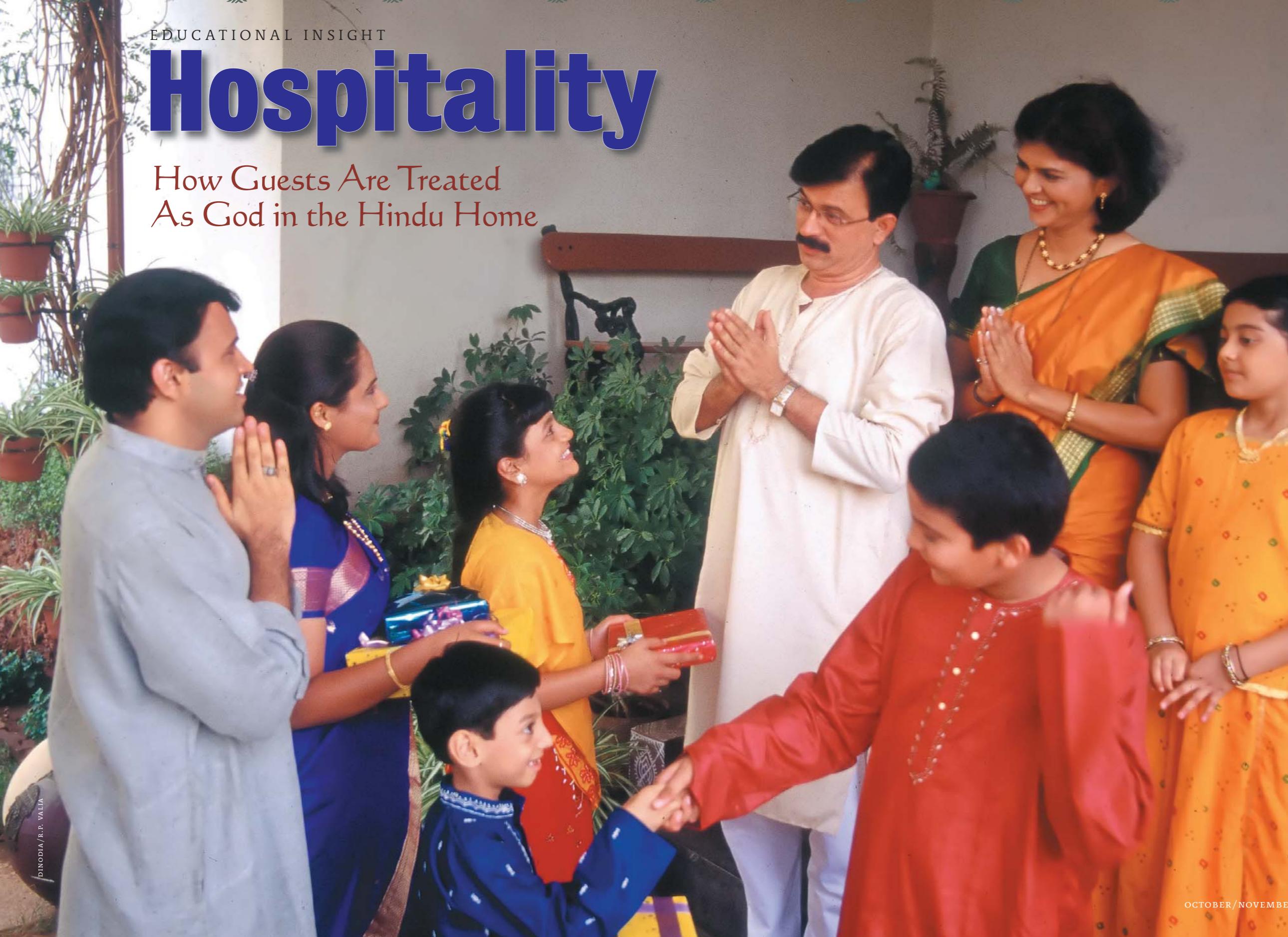


Blessing the Ishta Sivalingas: The small crystal (for men) and black stone (for women) Sivalingas are prepared according to the same scriptural injunctions used when a Siva-lingam is installed in a temple. Here two Lingas receive the nine-grains consecration.

EDUCATIONAL INSIGHT

Hospitality

How Guests Are Treated
As God in the Hindu Home



DINODIA/R.P. VALIA

BY LAVINA MELWANI, NEW YORK

BE ONE TO WHOM THE mother is a God. Be one to whom the father is a God. Be one to whom the teacher is a God. Be one to whom the guest is a God." So advises the *Taittiriya Upanishad* of the *Yajur Veda*, affirming the remarkable Hindu reverence for a guest. The Sanskrit word for guest is *athithi*, "without time," i.e., "one who has no fixed day for coming." It remains today the accepted custom of Hindus to visit friends, relatives and even strangers without notice. Hosting guests is one of the five central religious duties or "sacrifices" of the Hindu householder: paying homage to seers, to Gods and elementals, to ancestors, to living beings and, *manushya yajna*, "homage to men," which includes gracious hosting of guests. The ancient Tamil scripture, *Tirukural*, says, "The whole purpose of earning wealth and maintaining a home is to provide hospitality to guests." In this article we explore the many facets of Hindu hospitality, from how to receive a guest to how to behave in the home, to the impact of modernization, urbanization and the advent of the nuclear family upon this most ancient and revered obligation of our faith.

WELCOME!

Arriving guests are warmly greeted at the entryway by the entire family. In a well-adjusted, cohesive family, receiving visitors is a joyous event.



DO YOU THINK YOU ARE THE PERFECT HINDU HOST? WELL, here's a story that will make you reevaluate your hospitality skills, for the host in this tale is none other than Lord Krishna. When his boyhood friend, Sudama—hungry, impoverished and in rags—arrived at the palace, the guards refused to allow him in. But Lord Krishna, overjoyed to see his old friend, received him with open arms and joyfully led him to his throne. He personally washed Sudama's feet and fed him with his own hands. Sudama had brought a humble gift, a handful of parched rice tied in the corner of his shawl and was too ashamed to give it to Lord Krishna in front of all the fine courtiers, but Lord Krishna opened it with delight and ate the grains with pleasure and appreciation. To him, the true value of this meager gift lay in the affection with which it had been offered. Similar stories abound in our scriptures and histories.

Although I did not grow up in a particularly religious household, the concept of hospitality was still very traditionally Hindu, both in giving and receiving. I remember we stopped at a friend's home in Mathura after a pilgrimage to Haridwar. The hosts received us like VIPs, with open hearts and minds. We ate a wonderful vegetarian meal in the cool evening air in their garden, and then, as the stars came out, the string beds were brought out into the open, for family and guests, each covered with a mosquito net to ward off insects.

Another time, I was with my older brother, who had to stop at an acquaintance's home in Old Delhi to pick up some paperwork. The

family knew we were coming and had prepared a feast. In this very Hindu home, we removed our shoes, washed our hands and feet and sat on the immaculate kitchen floor with the hosts while a brahmin cook served us one of the most memorable meals I have ever eaten.

Indeed, you can never leave an Indian household without gaining a few ounces, for you will certainly be plied with some snacks, some tea at the very least, or a glass of cold rose sherbet in the heat of summer. In our home in New Delhi, family and friends came to us from everywhere, and they certainly got more than a glass of water: delicious meals, a comfortable bed, domestics hanging over their every need and, yes, even a guided tour of Delhi, and sometimes even Agra. Nor was the hospitality reserved just for visiting guests. Daily food was never eaten without my mother's consecrating a small portion to God, and a portion being given to a passing needy person or a cow.

Relatives came and were joyously received, especially on days of *shradhha* when the priest, uncles, aunts and cousins would descend on the house to honor the memory of ancestors. The house would take on an almost festive air, as scores of children erupted out of the arriving cars. After prayers and feeding the priest, the aroma of sizzling *puris* and *pakodas* wafted from the kitchen while elders embarked on a massive talkathon.

Sundari Katir of California told HINDUISM TODAY, "When I was growing up in Sri Lanka, guests would always be visiting us from different parts of the country and India. The whole household

would jump into action. My mother would assemble the meal, and we children would get our rooms all ready, because we would give them up and sleep on mats on the floor. It was such a natural thing to do, and we were always delighted to have guests. Today my brother Ranjan is one of the few relatives left in Colombo, and he carries on the tradition. He treats everyone as God, with good food, comfortable beds and heartfelt hospitality. I have become a better hostess after observing him."

God as Guest: The most common Hindu form of worship, *puja*, is, in fact, an act of hosting. Rare is the Hindu home without a shrine for the Deities. From huge family temples of marble in the homes of the wealthy to modest shrines, Hindus revere their Gods. Daily, images of the family Gods are bathed, clothed and offered fruit, flowers and incense, accompanied by chanting and the tinkle of the bell, all in the format of hosting a guest. The full 16-step *puja* begins with an invitation for God to come to the home, continues through offering of a seat, washing the feet with water, offerings of drink and food, garments and incense, flowers, etc., until finally the God is thanked and bid adieu. While the standard human guest would receive less adulation, a holy man visiting a family's home may well be welcomed and worshiped in this complete manner.

Festivals bring a more intense program to host God. At Dipavali, the Festival of Lights, when Goddess Lakshmi visits the homes of devotees, there is a frenzy of cleaning, sweeping and painting as

homes are beautified and decorated with hundreds of earthen lamps to greet Her.

Guest as God: At the very heart of Hinduism is the belief that the Almighty permeates everything. Indeed, the Hindu belief in the presence of the Paramatma in every living thing transforms each one of us into God. The ancient Hindu texts say the guest has to be shown honor by the host's going out to meet him, offering him water to wash his feet, by giving him a seat, lighting a lamp before him, providing food and lodging and accompanying him some distance when he departs. Thousands of years have passed, but this code of etiquette remains little changed from the ancient scriptures.

In the *Manu Dharma Shastras*, for example, the host is directed thus: "All the food shall be very hot, and the guests shall eat in silence. Having addressed them with the question: 'Have you dined well?' let him give them water to sip, and bid farewell to them with the words: 'Now rest.'" K.T. Achaya in *Indian Food: A Historical Companion* points out that guests had an honored rank in Vedic society and, after being ceremoniously received, were offered the am-brosial beverage, *madhuparka*, consisting of ghee, curd, milk, honey and sugar.

According to the *Dharma Shastras*, hosting guests is one of the five obligatory sacrifices or duties of the householder. Anusasana states, "The host should give his eye, mind and agreeable speech to the guest, he should personally attend on him and should accompa-

Tips for Being a Good Guest

AGUEST MAY BE ANYONE FROM A CLOSE RELATIVE TO A TOTAL stranger, and rules naturally vary accordingly. This summary is for a visitor somewhere between the two extremes.

Arrival: It is traditional that a guest need not inform a host of his impending arrival. However, in today's busy world, more and more often guests do give advance notice. The host may insist that no advance notice is necessary, and close friends or relatives may even take advance notice as an affront, a disturbing sign that all may not be well with the relationship.

Duration: It is very impolite of the host to ask how long the guest is staying. But, as a guest, you should convey this information in an casual manner. In a gesture of hospitality, the host will naturally retort that you should really stay much longer.

Gifts: Gifts are always given to hosts by guests when staying overnight in a home. The value of the gift varies greatly, of course, depending on the guest's circumstances and resources. It is proper to give a separate gift for the wife and the husband. The wife receives the nicest item. Small items should also be given for the children. In Sri Lanka, giving goes the other way as well. It is common for the host to give a gift to the guest, especially those poorer.

Helping: In a home without servants, considerate guests can help with housework and chores, as well as care for their quarters, even if the host insists it is not necessary. You can also help with cooking, as well as invite your hosts out for a meal.

Graciousness: It is an insult to refuse any offered drink or food. Blend into the family's rhythms. Be a genuine friend, taking real interest in the family's life and treating the children lovingly, as you would your own. Conversely, one should not meddle in family affairs, nor later make unflattering observations to others about one's hosts.

Thanks: After returning home, remember to send a warm and sincere thank-you letter, hand-written, mentioning some specific detail of your visit that you most appreciated.



Surprise: Guests may even arrive unannounced

Honing the Art of Hosting

HOSTING IS MORE AN ATTITUDE THAN A SET OF PRACTICES. The perfect host is truly open to guests and honestly delighted with their presence. That said, here are some specifics to keep your hosting up to par.

Welcome: Greet the guest with *namaskara*, invite him cheerfully into the house. Invite him to sit comfortably in the best surroundings. Speak pleasantly to him, inquiring about his welfare.

Refreshments: Always offer the guest something to eat and drink. Usually tea or juice is served, along with snacks. At least a glass of water is offered (with a smile and apology).

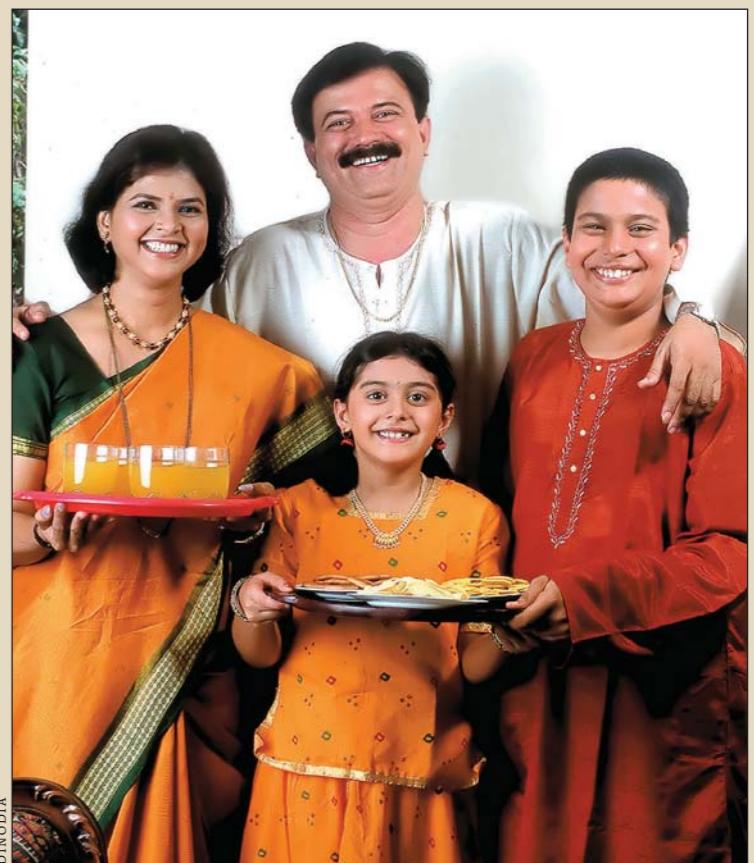
Hosting: Guests who are members of the extended family will just fit in to the family routine. When a bit more formality is called for, the father, if present, will speak with the guest. If not present, the mother and a son will fulfill this role, and if no son is present, the mother may act as hostess, but only with the accompaniment of someone close to the family. The children may go off to play among themselves, stay with the adults or come and go.

Wife Home Alone: If the lady of the house is home alone and a male visitor comes to see her husband, it is not proper for her to invite him in, or for him to expect to enter. Rather, he will leave a message and depart.

Punctuality: Life is generally more relaxed in the East than in the West. A good guideline is to not be surprised or offended if your guest arrives late or early. However, be punctual in your own engagements, as this is appreciated.

Duration of Stay: It is quite impolite to ask a guest how long he intends to stay, but it is good protocol for guests to make their plans and itinerary known from the outset.

Goodbyes: Always see your guest to his transport, and wave and watch until they are out of sight.



Welcome: A pleasant reception is the first step



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ny him when he (the guest) departs; this sacrifice (*yajna*) demands these five fees."

The visit of a holy person is given extra special attention, and for good reason. *Vriddha Harita Dharma Shastra* says that if a brahmachari ascetic stays as a guest in a householder's home for a single night, the latter's accumulated sins are destroyed, and when such an ascetic takes food at a man's house, it is Vishnu Himself who is fed.

Common Sense: It should be clearly stated that Hindu hospitality does not extend to being careless with the safety of one's family and home. Even Krishna's guards kept Sudama—a brahmin at that—outside the gates. When HINDUISM TODAY's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami (Gurudeva), was in Sri Lanka as a young man, he experienced wonderful hospitality across the island from all the communities. Part of the time he stayed in the traditional Tamil village of Alaveddy at the home of Kandiah Chettiar, one of his teachers, receiving instructions on, among other things, the hosting of guests. One day, Chettiar had given food to a suspicious-looking man at the gate, rather than inviting him to the porch of the house. When the young Gurudeva asked why he didn't invite the man in,

Chettiar replied, with characteristic frankness, "Because he would steal everything in the house." The *Dharma Shastras* discuss at some length the issue of unworthy or even dangerous guests, yet advising that, no matter what the circumstances, the visitor should at least receive food.

Village Traditions: Sheela Venkatakrishnan of Chennai, Tamil Nadu, told HINDUISM TODAY, "You offer your guest the same love and respect that you would offer to God. Simple! A striking example of hospitality is when the whole town of Kumbakonam, where my father hails from, turns host during the week of the Mahamaham." Thousands upon thousands of people come for the holy bath in the tank of the Kumbareswaran temple, and every home opens its doors to accommodate and feed all who reach its doorstep. No one is turned away.

Sheela explained, "Houses in the villages and towns of Tamil Nadu usually have a fairly large platform just outside their front door, called a *thinnai*. This serves two purposes. One is temporary storage of grain during the harvest and also an airy place to sleep during the hot and humid summers. It is not unusual for a traveler to use this as a rest-

ing place. You could open your front door in the morning and find someone sleeping on your *thinnai*. This is where you would find the strangers during Mahamaham. Of course, family and friends would be accommodated inside the house. But everyone is fed, irrespective of caste. It is possible that in the morning there is one set of people, in the afternoon another and a totally different group at night. The meals served would be according to whatever time of day it is. Also, the bath area often has a separate access from outside the house."

In her grandfather's day, Sheela noted, it was the practice for the head of the household to stand at his doorstep at mealtime and ask loudly, not once but thrice, "Is there someone who needs to be fed?" Sometimes a traveler or a poor man would come in for food. It was only after the guest had been fed that family would eat—one of the explicit instructions in the *Dharma Shastras*. The *Apastamba* says, "He who eats before his guest eats destroys food, prosperity, progeny, cattle and the merit of his own house."

Hospitality permeates Indian culture, both on a personal and institutional level. In Tamil Nadu, many of the bigger and older temples have the *annadanam* scheme—a daily free feeding. Recently, with

An enjoyable visit results when both guest and host are experts in the art of congenial conversation.

the active patronage of the government, many more temples have revived this practice, where they feed a minimum of 100 people each day at noon. Muslim *darghas* have adopted this practice, while the Sikh gurudwaras have always followed it. Mention also has to be made of the Hyderabadi brand of hospitality that has few parallels. Made famous by the Muslim nawabs of Lucknow, those on the receiving end enjoyed courtesy, food, drink and congeniality—all served with an elegant world-class flourish. Every ethnic and religious subculture of India puts a premium on hospitality.

Little wonder, then, that in multicultural India these varied streams of hospitality have coalesced to produce a generous and warm people. Visitors to India come away with awed stories of the way they were embraced and included in every family celebration—in fact, made part of a larger, extended family. Often these relationships last over the years.

You cannot go to even the humblest home without being honored with food and Indian drink, as Janet Chawla found out some years back. Chawla, an American who married a Sikh and now lives in New Delhi, believes the charm of India is in the graciousness of its people, although it is getting less so in the big cities. She feels there is a grace, a way of sitting together, singing together at weddings. People in small villages, she says, really are very giving, sharing the little they have.

"In America, if we were sitting and working together, and I had a sandwich—I would open it and eat it alone. An Indian would never do that," she says. "There is this kind of culturally prescribed sharing which I find very gracious." Janet didn't mention it, but some Westerners visiting India can find the level of hospitality disconcerting, especially the tradition of never leaving a guest alone. That impinges upon the Westerner's desire for privacy and personal space—concepts absent from the Indian milieu.

Hospitality at Home: Hindu tradition lays great stress on the respect due to guests. The greatest hurt for a guest is the thought that the host or hostess does not enjoy one's presence. Therefore, Hindus go out of their way to make each guest feel welcome. It is proper protocol to drop whatever one is doing, no matter how important, to entertain a visitor. One of the privileges of friendship in the East is being able to drop by any time without advance notice.

Mitesh Patel, whose family hails from Kathiawad region of Gujarat, says that in his hometown hospitality is extended to everyone: "When a guest comes to our house, we rarely let them go without offering a good meal. We don't feel that guests are a burden, whether they are staying for few hours or few days, and offer them full assistance."

He gives the example of his uncle who left the ancestral village 30 years ago to settle in the city of Rajkot. Three decades later, if anyone from the village comes for a medical checkup to the big hospital in the city, his uncle makes sure healthy, home-made meals go out to the patient every single day.

The level of hospitality depends upon several factors, the most obvious being family ties. Traditionally, any known or unknown member of one's extended family—and the Hindu extended family includes not only blood relatives to several degrees removed, but also all the in-laws by marriage—is basically treated just like a member of the immediate family. It would not be uncommon, for example, for a student at the university to stay with distant relatives throughout his entire schooling.

Then there are friends, business acquaintances, people from the same village or state and so on, all of whom have some connection



to the host. They, too, may be treated just like a member of the extended family, as Janet Chawla experienced, though commonly a bit more formally. We can see from Sheela's description of her childhood village that the homes were designed to accommodate even total strangers in a convenient fashion.

The concept of hospitality extends to welcoming customers to business settings, where it certainly makes good sense. Go into a sari shop in crowded marketplaces and the owner will automatically offer you a soft drink in the heat. If you're shopping for an expensive wedding trousseau, they are even more solicitous—offering coconut water, a snack and drinks from the market. I recall my father in his jewelry store not only offering soft drinks, *paan* in silver containers and candy, but also giving the kids who came to the shop small items as gifts.

Untouchables: Yet, one does have to admit that Hinduism's glowing hospitality report card does have one very big black mark on it, something which the Gods probably did not ordain but which wily man has reinterpreted for his own gain—the treatment of the so-called lower castes. It is really quite inconceivable that a loving religion, which proclaims that God is in every living thing, would denigrate a whole class of human beings as untouchables.

The story of everyday village India is full of the low castes being turned away from village wells, being castigated for worshiping at the temple or merely for passing by the home of a brahmin. While things are improving in the big cities where caste and creed lose their importance in the great economic bazaar and where politicians see the lower castes as potential votes, the village scene remains woefully medieval. Buried in the back pages of newspapers are frequent stories of atrocities, which should shock us all from our complacency and our conceit of just how hospitable we may really be.

Loss of Tradition: In the larger hospitality picture, things seem to be changing for the worse as the time-honored extended family does battle with modernity. Dr. T. H. Chowdary of Hyderabad writes, "As people leave their villages and joint families break up and the educated move to flats in the cities, the old idea of hospitality is fast dying. In the villages and small towns in the past, in the evening when beggars came for food, whatever was left in the house would be given away. In those days of no refrigeration, food could not be kept. Now in the towns and cities, surplus is stored in refrigerators, which have thus come to be known as *garibmar*, the killers of the poor.

"Even when brothers and sisters and such near ones come, one silently wishes that they will stay in a hotel and, at best, they might come for a dinner or a breakfast," he goes on. "What to speak of caring for the parents or relatives when the wife and husband have no time even to talk to one another! Or when the one-year-old child, the only child, is put in a day-care center so that both the wife and husband can earn enough to satisfy their ideas of modern comforts, including that refrigerator or new TV.

"What to speak of hospitality for friends and unknowns," says Chowdary, "when the nuclear family of wife and husband are saying that the old father must stay with one son and the old mother with another son? They want to separate the old parents, considering them burdens to be shared by the sons."



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Serving food is a host's duty. To omit this courtesy is a serious affront, as it is for the guest to refuse what is offered.

As Chowdary observes, with women joining the work force in large numbers, and time, effort and budgets stretched by modern life, the old-time hospitality is often compromised. Earlier, visitors could just drop in, but now hosts get agitated to find unexpected guests on the doorstep—a far cry from the hospitality of the village home's *thinnai*.

Sheela Venkatakrishnan agrees: "In recent years, the trend has become, as Gurudeva said, 'The women going out of their homes to work.' Living in nuclear families, who is there to take care of the home, leave alone a guest? You tend to think twice about visiting a friend or relative, not wanting to impose or inconvenience them in any way." Still, she points out that they have many relatives in joint families who welcome them with open arms. She herself lives in a joint family in Chennai where someone is always home: "The doors of our home and our hearts are open to God and all whom He chooses to send our way."

The Diaspora Adjusts: The picture, however, is bleaker in the diaspora, where immigrants struggle with the beliefs they grew up with and the pressures of their new environment. Most manage to keep the hospitality intact for family and close friends. Some go to extraordinary lengths, sponsoring relatives and even opening up their homes to them till they get settled.

The Gujarati community is particularly strong in this respect, and many continue to live in large, extended families abroad. This sense of caring is extended to the entire community and, in fact, many Patels have managed to do so well in the motel business because of their unity and financial support of friends and relatives. No wonder the Gujaratis command a whopping portion of the motel industry. They are well-trained in the ways of hospitality, for as one of the successful hoteliers, H.P. Rama, affirms, "We Indians believe the guest is God."

Mitesh Patel, who lives in Edison, New Jersey, came to the US when he was 15, so he has seen life on both continents. Now 24, he believes that Hindu hospitality has lessened in the US, Canada and the UK, but not in India: "I believe the reason is quite simple. NRIs are busy making big bucks in these countries. Sometimes even family members don't see each other for a few days because they are busy working, so they feel that it's hard to accommodate a guest."

Indeed, living abroad, notions of hospitality do undergo a change. Also, abroad, one would never dream of dropping in on acquaintances without calling ahead. This is a culture where even children do not just play but have organized "play dates" scheduled out weeks in advance.

Indians living abroad do have to contend with housework, their jobs and the daily commute, all



without the support of extended family or domestic helpers. So their standards of hospitality have diminished. Some compromise, putting guests in hotels or taking shortcuts in their care. Truly generous hospitality in any society or home depends on the strength, integrity and security of the family unit.

Changing Attitudes: Summer, especially, means an endless barrage of guests from India and points in the diaspora. Homes become as crowded as the Grand Central Terminal, and hosts are faced with a multitude of tasks. As one exhausted woman, whose house was full of summer guests, told me, "Houseguests are like fish: after three days, they stink."

She didn't know it, but this adage appeared in the 1736 edition of *Poor Richard's Almanac* by Benjamin Franklin, one of America's founding fathers. He said, precisely, "Fish and houseguests stink after three days." The statement, and the attitude behind it, stand in stark contrast to the Hindu view of the guest as God. And it's not just an American trait. Shakespeare wrote with a similar attitude in *King Henry VI, Part I*, "Unbidden guests are often welcomest when they are gone." In all fairness, there are many hospitable Americans and Britishers, but offering hospitality is not the religious obligation it is for Hindus. It is also relevant that, in the Hindu village, true strangers were served on the porch, or even at the compound gate, in order to preserve the sanctity and safety of the home.

While the pressures of life in the West are there for the hosts, to some extent their attitudes have also changed. The rhythms of the place where you live impact you. Leading frenetic lives in the West, people tend to become more brusque, more cynical. Like Franklin, they begin to regard the guest as an unwelcome nuisance. Standards of hospitality are indeed changing, and one wonders how far we should embrace modernization at the expense of true hospitality?

What to Do? Gurudeva once observed, "The guest is God, not an intruder. All Hindus have a heart to receive the guest as God. This is very important for us to remember, because guests come and guests go. Often, guests come and never come back, because of subtle inflections in the voice, because it was forgotten to serve even a glass of water, which is traditional in Hindu culture. The guest is God, not an intruder. When someone steps up to you, drop your work. People are more important than paper. People are more important than giving oneself to the computer. People are more important than anything else. People are the working out of your karma."

Yes, it may help to remember an old Indian saying: *Dane dane pe likha hai khane wale ka naam*—"On each grain is written the name of the eater." The people who turn up on your doorstep are meant to be there, part of your karma, part of the big cosmic play. Of course, it's hard to see it quite that way when you are under stress at work and still have to produce dinner for your guests by 7:00 pm!

For Hindus caught in the modern world of hurry and scurry, it would be good to reaffirm their duty toward guests and to refresh their memories on how to be perfect hosts—and perfect guests. There is etiquette for both roles, and if each plays his part well, the whole experience can be rewarding.

Hosts should give of themselves with a generous and open heart,



exerting every effort to make their visitors' stay a memorable one, where the kindnesses and warmth are vast, even if the budget is tight. They should do all they can to entertain and help visitors in a new and bewildering place.

Guests should attempt to be considerate, informing their hosts of their length of stay in advance. They should pick up after themselves and not add to the harried hostess' tasks. Bringing small gifts for the family members, entertaining the children or perhaps offering to take the family out to dinner are practical and appreciated gestures.

Hospitality is a virtue that has many benefits for the receiver and the giver, as these small kindnesses smooth social connections and build relations. It also shows the next generation the way to continue the beliefs of our ancestors. And of course, often the shoe is on the other foot—and the host himself becomes a guest. So he should treat his guests as he himself would like to be treated.

There are so many stories of God Vishnu himself donning beggar's raiment and coming to the door for alms. So, the next time the door-

A fond farewell puts a sweet end to the guests' experience, and creates anticipation for the next visit

bell rings, welcome your guests with an open heart. Look beyond the facial features, the clothing and the physical bodies into the eternal soul which glows within each of us like the purest of gold. This is the Self that scripture says is immortal, the one that water cannot wet, sword cannot cut nor fire burn. And so, bending low, with folded hands, welcome the divine Paramatma, the God who is within each of us.

The author, **Lavina Melwani**, a popular freelance correspondent, was born in Sindh, grew up in New Delhi and has lived in Hong Kong and Africa. She currently resides in New York with her husband and two children. **T. H. Chowdary**, Information Technology Advisor: Government of Andhra Pradesh, contributed to this article.

Scripture Speaks About Hospitality

THE SOUTH INDIAN ethical masterpiece, *Tirukural*, composed in Tamil couplets by Saint Tiruvalluvar (ca 200 bce), devotes an entire chapter to hospitality. This sagely compendium of practical advice, called "a bible on virtue for the human race," is so pithy, so profound and so sacred that it is sworn upon today in South Indian courts. Here now are verses 81 to 90.



A. MANIVEL

The whole purpose of earning wealth and maintaining a home is to provide hospitality to guests.

When a guest is in the home, it is improper to hoard one's meal, even if it happens to be the nectar of immortality.

If a man cares daily for those who come to him, his life will never suffer the grievous ruin of poverty.

Wealth's Goddess dwells in the hospitable home of those who host guests with a smiling face.

If a man eats only after attending to guests' needs, what further sowing will his fertile fields require?

The host who, caring for guests, watches hopefully for more, will himself be a welcomed guest of those whose home is Heaven.

Charity's merit cannot be measured by gifts given. It is measured by measuring the receiver's merits.

Those who never sacrifice to care for guests will later lament: "We hoarded wealth, estranged ourselves, now none will care for us."

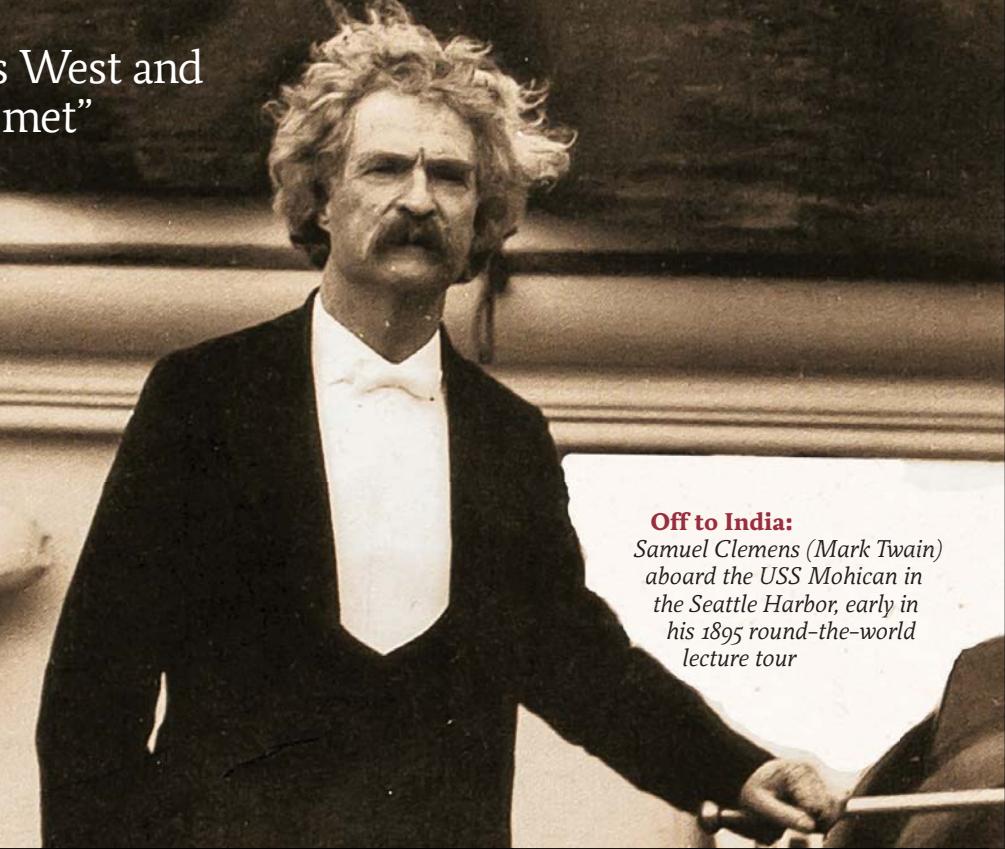
The poverty of poverty is having plenty yet shunning guests. Such senselessness is only found in senseless fools.

The delicate anicham flower withers when merely smelled, but an unwelcome look is enough to wither a guest's heart.

THE TRAVELS OF TWAIN

"East is East and West is West and finally the Twain have met"

COURTESY ALFRED KNOPF



MARK TWAIN SAID, "I THINK WE never become really and genuinely our entire and honest selves until we are dead—and not then until we have been dead years and years."

Mark Twain (1835-1910) has now been dead for just over a century, and few would deny that he is looking good for his age. Firmly cemented in history as one of America's greatest writers, he has been accused of being the funniest man on Earth.

Mark Twain was a printer's apprentice, a riverboat pilot, a prospector, a Confederate soldier, a newspaper editor, an entrepreneur and a lecturer—and he wrote about it all. It was his writing that made him great—greater still as the test of time now confers on him an immortality he would certainly pooh-pooh.

Although the humor and linguistic genius of Twain's writing would have earned him enduring celebrity, it was the caustically revealing insight behind all his jesting that made him a legend. There was also the vastness of his subject matter. Extremely well read, well traveled and well informed for a man of his times, he had a little something to say about almost everything. And what he said then could just as validly be said today.

Most certainly, Mark Twain's fame will not wane. It is, instead, growing like his own tall tales. Ken Burns, Geoffrey C. Ward and Dayton Duncan co-authored a popular and beautifully illustrated biography of him, entitled *Mark Twain*, companioning a four-hour PBS special that aired in 2002. Hallmark produced a full-length movie entitled "Roughing It" staring James Garner and Jill Eikenberry. Laura Bush, wife of US President George W. Bush, chose Mark Twain as her leading feature author in an American literature series she sponsored at the White House. And for 47 years, in more than 2,000 performances, noted actor Hal Holbrook has traveled the world with his magnificent dramatic monologue "Mark Twain Tonight." Others are following in his footsteps. The list goes on.

Twain's tales of his encounter with India and Hinduism are typical of the famous essayist—witty, sagacious, exaggerated and cynical. Yet few people know he ever went to Dharma's homeland or wrote so extensively about what he saw there.

The journey was not a pilgrimage, though in many ways it became exactly that. At age 60, Mark Twain, whose real name was

Samuel Clemens, had fallen on hard times. The literary genius who gave the world *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Innocents Abroad* had become a pauper. It happened when he undertook two large business enterprises with Charles Webster Publishing and Paige Typesetting Machine; they both failed miserably. Twain had borrowed heavily for the ventures, and felt personally responsible to investors who had trusted in him.

It was to Twain's credit that he refused to let those who had trusted in him suffer. He fussed for weeks and finally crafted a plan to recoup their losses doing what he did best—lecturing and writing books. The debt was vast, about \$100,000, and so the plan had to be equally ambitious. He chose to circle the globe. It would be a long, arduous journey, and he was sick much of the time, mostly from a cold and a carbuncle. He set sail for the East, traveling west. The itinerary took him to Hawaii, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India, Mauritius, South Africa and England. It is, interestingly, a list of nations which our late publisher, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, often traveled to, in the same order.

The journey was not a pilgrimage, though in many ways it became exactly that. At age 60, Mark Twain, whose real name was

The Year-Long Adventure

Though he traveled far and experienced much, Twain's three months in India were the highlight of his year-long trek and the intriguing centerpiece of his revealing 712-page book, *Following the Equator*.

So it was that the self-proclaimed vagabond and literary gadfly set out on July 15, 1895, to pay his debts; but what he really gave the world was a saga, a romance and a human adventure. Ironically, it was poverty that took him to India and it was poverty-stricken India that made him solvent again—an observation he might have made himself were he not so close to the facts of the matter.

Twain traveled with his wife Olivia and daughter and with a colleague, Mr. Smythe, who made all of the India travel and lecture arrangements. Landing in Bombay from Colombo, he was overwhelmed by the color and the ancientness of the land. He wrote: "This is India! The land of dreams and romance, of fabulous wealth and fabulous poverty, of splendor and rags, of palaces and hovels, of famine and pestilence, of genii and giants and Aladdin lamps, of tigers and elephants, the cobra and the jungle, the country of a hundred nations and a hundred tongues, of a thousand religions and two million gods, cradle of the human race, birthplace of human speech, mother of history, grandmother of legend, great-grandmother of tradition, whose yesterdays bear date with the mouldering antiquities of the rest of the nations—the one sole country under the sun that is endowed with an imperishable interest for alien prate, for lettered and ignorant, wise and fool, rich and poor, bond and free, the one land that all men desire to see, and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined. Even now, after a lapse of a year, the delirium of those days in Bombay has not left me, and I hope it never will."

A trained mind could infer that Mark Twain was impressed with India. But work called. He had chosen a conversational style for his presentations, which he called "At Home." He thought lectures too formal, too stiff, for his manner and purpose. They were to him "speech," and he preferred "talk." That is not to say that Twain's informal talks, with their long and detailed stories, their tearful pathos and side-hugging fun, were either careless or totally spontaneous. Rather, they were crafted, rehearsed, improved, refined and changed according to each audience. Such a studied approach paid off.

With his white suit, curly hair, shaggy eyebrows and magnetic smile, Clemens's appearance was compelling. His face did not suggest his latent humor but recalled a stern and serious appearance as he paced up and down the stage, a slender but well-built man in a spotless white suit. Said a Bombay paper,

The Kaiser-I-Hind

By far the MOST WIDELY CIRCULATED of all the GUJARATI & ANGLO-GUJARATI Journals throughout India

માન્ય દિનરચારીને સર્વ અનુભાવી માર્ગે માણ્ય કોણો કાંચાની કાંચાની પાંચેંદું પણ.

કાયસ્ટ હિન્ડ.

THE KAISER-I-HIND.

Vol. XV. BOMBAY: SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 1896. No. 735

With the help of the press: (Above) Mark Twain's lectures, which he much preferred to refer to as "talks," were advertised in top Indian newspapers like the *Kaiser-I-Hind* of Bombay. (Below) An advertisement featured in the *Kaiser-I-Hind* for a "talk" by Twain.

MARK TWAIN
MARK TWAIN
THE
Greatest Humourist of the Age

WHO
On Friday afternoon held a thronged and fashionable audience in a ripple of laughter from start to finish will

Next Monday Afternoon at 5-30
GIVE HIS FAMOUS
SECOND MARK TWAIN "AT HOME"
SECOND MARK TWAIN "AT HOME"
IN THE
NOVELTY THEATRE
WHEN AN
ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ENTERTAINMENT
Will be presented.

In compliance with the desire of many who are unable to attend the afternoon recitals, Mr. Clemens will

Next Tuesday Evening at 9-30
Next Tuesday Evening at 9-30
GIVE
Farewell Mark Twain "At Home"
WITH
More Life and Character Sketches.
Rs. 4; 3; 2; 1. Plan & Tickets at SOUNDY'S.
R. S. SMYTHE.

"With his feet planted some distance apart and a hand sometimes in his trouser pockets, elbow sometimes placed against his cheek and supported by the other arm, whilst his eyes, oftener than not, gazed as he would in the presence of a group of familiar friends, he never once raised his voice above a conversational pitch."

Indian audiences, accustomed to British speech, pronunciation and formality, found in his American accent a certain piquancy. They liked it. America was something of a

mystery for most people he encountered. They knew about George Washington, about Chicago and its World's Fair that made Swami Vivekananda a world figure. That was about the extent of general knowledge in those days.

The main purpose for which Clemens traveled around the world was fulfilled satisfactorily, for he collected money enough to pay off a large part of his debt. Much of the success came in India, where his once-in-a-lifetime presence and Smythe's crafty media hype drew large crowds. Most of the theaters where he appeared accommodated about 1,000 people, and extra seats often had to be provided. In Bombay the Novelty Theatre held 1,400. He collected about US\$650 for each evening. Stories, anecdotes, human sketches and homilies, excerpts from Huck Finn and such filled the three-hour evenings. His wife always felt the audience should get its money's worth and urged him to not end after just an hour or two.

One man wrote: "So, Mark Twain came to India and conquered the people. What the British with nearly a hundred and fifty years of strong rule could not achieve, he could do in one day by being At Home to the people. They had read Mark Twain and were greatly responsive to his subtle humor and highly exaggerated stories."

The Grand Land of India

Mark Twain had read over much about the subcontinent and imagined its "Aladdin Lamp" atmosphere, but even so he was not prepared for what he encountered between January 18 and March 31, 1896:

"There is only one India! It is the only country that has a monopoly of grand and imposing specialties. When another country has



Quotes & Quips

By Mark Twain

His first impressions of India

"Everything was absolutely new—all that beautiful color, all those costumes which one hears of but never sees, and which if you see them on stage you never believe in. It defies all description: one simply laughs at the painter's brush; it is impossible for him to reproduce it."

His first meeting with a holy man

"Suddenly a man came up who had traveled hundreds of miles for this very experience [of worshiping a holy man]. As soon as he approached near enough, he prostrated himself in the dust and kissed the saint's foot. I had never realized till then what it was to stand in the presence of a divinity.... I have no hesitation in saying that in all my travels I have never seen anything so remarkable as Banares or any body so wonderful as that recluse."

On the poverty of India:

"A feature that has struck me very forcibly in India is the poverty of the country. It is a poverty based upon a certain value which does not exist in the country I come from. Somebody told me that it doesn't make any difference how low wages in India are, the working man will somehow save something out of it."

On the city of Banares

"The city of Banares is in effect just a big church, a religious hive, whose every cell is a temple, a shrine or a mosque, and whose every conceivable earthly and heavenly good is procurable under one roof, so to speak.... I think one would not get tired of the bathers, nor their costumes, nor of their ingenuities in getting out of them and into them again without exposing too much bronze, nor of their devotional gesticulations and absorbed bead-tellings."

From Huckleberry Finn

"You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth."

a remarkable thing, it cannot have it all to itself—some other country has a duplicate. But India—that is different. Its marvels are its own; the patents cannot be infringed; imitations are not possible. And think of the size of them, the majesty of them, the weird and outlandish character of most of them!"

"India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth; she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellects; she had mines, and woods, and a fruitful soul."

As he traveled through Bombay, Pune, Allahabad, Banares, Calcutta, Darjeeling, Agra, Jaipur, Delhi and other cities, mostly by train (of which he had much to say), the American humorist gathered impressions and crafted them into descriptions. He later wrote about the animals in India, with special reference to the crows and lions and an elephant ride that made him feel quite regal. He gave tales of life in Indian hotels, of fancy parties and long names, of street scenes and fakirs, of the elaborate Indian costumes that made him wax poetic, and even of long-forgotten historical events. An example: "In other countries a long wait at a train station is a dull thing and tedious, but one has no right to have that feeling in India. You have the monster crowd of bejeweled natives, the stir, the bustle, the confusion, the shifting splendors of the costumes—dear me, the delight of it, the charm of it are beyond speech."

Diaries and notebooks piled up. Of India's people he wrote, "The bad hearts are there, but I believe that they are in a small, poor minority. One thing is sure: They are much the most interesting people in the world—and the nearest to being incomprehensible. At the very least they are the hardest to account for. Their character and their history, their customs and their religion confront you with riddles at every turn—riddles which are a trifle more perplexing after they are explained than they were before. [As for spirituality], it makes our own religious enthusiasm seem pale and cold."

Following the Equator

In the eyes of the educated Indian people Mark Twain was not merely a public speaker or a writer, but a man with a serious social purpose and human understanding who cemented the hearts of two mutually unknown people with different backgrounds and cultural influences, and subjected to colonial and social tyrannies.

Following the Equator is thought by many to be Mark Twain's best travelogue, an example of his observations of human dignity and debasement. Travel accounts interested him throughout his life, and he wrote about his trips to Europe and around the American continent. He liked history, biography

and travels. He roamed about with an open eye and a receptive mind and told vividly of what he saw. His keen eye detected shams which he exposed with sympathy due to a tolerant attitude about the human condition. His intense interest in social problems and his travel-guide craft reached their height in *Following the Equator*. Permeated with his uniquely singular stories and whimsies, it received fine reviews during his lifetime. He considered it among his finest efforts.

Mark Twain's humorous comments are characteristically exaggerated in all his works, but most particularly in his travel accounts. In *Following the Equator* he starts with a fantastic tale of a shark that swallowed a man and his *London Times* in England and delivered the paper in just ten days to a shark hunter in Australia who made some money, since the shark-delivered wool market news arrived weeks before the steamer officially docked with the same paper.

Twain was especially impressed with the brilliant color and uncommonness of the Eastern costume. There were many sights of Oriental beauty in India, from "the tender shapely bodies, slim legs and arms and little feet and hands of the Indian woman and the rich and vivid deep colors of the graceful robes they wear—usually silks, soft and flimsy," to the extraordinarily glittering dress of the maharajahs and princes. It was "all color, bewitching color—everywhere, all around, all the way around."

There is no doubt that Twain was shaken by the reality he found in India. First in Bombay, then village by village, the immensity of history and of want fell upon his weary eyes. Like a mountain climber, he went through ups and downs of illness and robustness, of gaiety and grief, of distress and wonderment. Any modern-day pilgrim could sympathize with such extremes.

But never did his humor fail him. Encountering the firm Indian pillow in a hotel for the first time, he quipped: "In India from the beginning, in time of war, breastworks have been built of hotel pillows. It was found that a cannon ball could go through earth or sandbag, but when it hit a pillow it hit with a dull thud and dropped to the ground."

The Oxford of India

Despite the crowded and frequent funereal experiences, Banares was not entirely a disappointment to Mark Twain. He called it "the Oxford of India" for its wealth of Hindu and Sanskrit studies. He met the priests who purported to broker salvation for the pious contributor, but he also met a real holy man in whom Hinduism and saintliness became embodied for him. The man's name was Swami Bhaskaranand Saraswati. Twain visited the Swami, who had studied Vedanta philosophy and renounced the world, in a

A most sacred place: Banares, located in northeast-central India on the Ganga River southeast of Lucknow, is one of India's oldest cities. It is a sacred Hindu pilgrimage site with some 1,500 temples, palaces and shrines. This photo was taken around the time that Mark

Twain was there. After watching nine corpses being cremated on the bank of the sacred Ganges river in Banares, Twain quipped, "I should not wish to see any more of it unless I might select the parties."



COURTESY SAMUEL BOUME

In the City of Light

Experiencing how Hindus view death

A TWO-DAY VISIT TO Banares presented Mark Twain and his party with an opportunity to explore Hinduism and investigate especially its contradictions, orthodoxy and superstition. The filthy waters of the Ganga disgusted him, and the fact that pilgrims looked upon it as pure and purifying and drank it eagerly absolutely repelled him.

His enduring fascination with various ways that humankind

deals with death and burial was amply fulfilled in Banares. He attended cremation ceremonies for hours on end, watching, stretching his mind to take it all in as he had earlier at the Parsee Towers of Silence. He later wrote,

"We are drifting slowly—but hopefully—toward cremation these days. It could not be expected that this progress should be swift, but if it be steady and continuous, even if slow, that will suffice. When cremation

guidebooks a man could acquire ignorance enough in twenty-four hours in a country like this to last him a year."

His story of Banares is caustically critical of Hindu beliefs. He noted that wherever there was room for one more Lingam, a Lingam was there. "If Vishnu had foreseen what this town was going to be, he would have called it Idolville or Lingamburg." Still, he saw so much that was new to him, experienced so fully, that he was to later say, "I think Banares is one of the most wonderful places I have ever seen. It has struck me that a Westerner feels in Banares very much as an Oriental must feel while he is planted down in the middle of London."



He Lived Right Next Door

Sharing Common Ground with Mr. Twain



HINDUISM TODAY

Mark Twain was here: At the young age of 26, Samuel Clemens hoisted more than a few mugs of beer at the local brewery in Virginia City, Nevada, where he worked as a writer for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise* and first came to be known as Mark Twain. A hundred years later that brewery became a monastery (above) where from 1964 to 1972 the staff of *Hinduism Today* lived, served and founded a major printing press.

small garden called Anandabag where he lived. This soul impressed Twain as a great spiritual leader and scholar, compelling him to write: "He is no longer a part or feature of this world. He is utterly holy, utterly pure." Their meeting was enthusiastically retold by Twain again and again, "There he is. He is minus the trappings of civilization. He hasn't a rag on his back. But he has perfect manners, a ready wit and a turn for conversation."

Tolerance was essential to Samuel Langhorne Clemens. It had to be. He was raised amid its opposite and had seen too much of hatred and self-righteousness in the slave-master relationship of the American South. So he tried again and again to teach others the foolishness of it. After his meeting with the Indian holy man, he reflected at length on the matter: "He has my reverence. And I don't offer it as a common thing and

poor, but as an unusual thing and of value. The ordinary reverence, the reverence defined and explained by the dictionary costs nothing. Reverence for one's own sacred things—parents, religion, flag, laws, and respect for one's own beliefs—these are feelings which we cannot even help. They come natural to us; they are involuntary, like breathing. There is no personal merit in breathing. But the reverence which is difficult, and which has personal merit in it, is the respect which you pay, without compulsion, to the political or religious attitude of a man whose beliefs are not yours. You can't revere his gods or his politics, and no one expects you to do that, but you could respect his belief in them if you tried hard enough. But it is very, very difficult; it is next to impossible, and so we hardly ever try. If the man doesn't believe as we do, we say he is a crank, and that settles

it. I mean it does nowadays, because now we can't burn him."

Mark Twain eschewed prejudice most of the time, and those that remained with him did not sully seriously his basic conception of man and the world, for he could laugh through them at the stupidities of individuals both at home and abroad. Mr. Bandaranaike, the late Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, appreciated Twain's "mixture of humorous sympathy for the underdog and moral indignation about the cruelties and hypocrisies of mankind," adding, "How could I be hostile to a country that produced Mark Twain?"

Nonetheless, Mark Twain never truly comprehended Hinduism. Through Rev. Parker's eyes he saw the darker side—the unfortunate practices of making religion a business, and the immense poverty (which he rightly blamed on India's invaders). Only in one visit

MORE DECADES AGO THAN WE generally speak of, the staff of *HINDUISM TODAY* lived and served in a remote Hindu monastery in the mountain-desert region of Nevada. The wood-and-brick building, standing three stories high, was surrounded by sage in the summer and snow in the winter. It was just half a mile down the hill from Virginia City.

As it happens, Samuel Clemens came to Virginia City with his brother in the summer of 1861. Just 26, he had failed at mining and stock speculations and become a writer for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*. It was here, on February 3, 1863, that "Mark Twain" was born when young Clemens signed a humorous travelogue with that pseudonym.

As it happened, a local brewery served the thirsts of about 70,000 miners (everyone was a miner). Twain visited it often. In case you haven't guessed, a hundred years later the Old Nevada Brewery became a monastic retreat. We also had occasions to set type for our publications with the same sorts used by Mr. Clemens, in his very office.

Years later, we resettled in Hawaii. But even on the remote Garden Island of Kauai we discovered our rambler had been here first. He noted that our Lumahai Beach (where the movie *Bali Hai* would later be filmed) was the most beautiful in the world. It is.

And so it was that our destiny and that of the perceptive, comic and bitter Mark Twain crossed—a hundred years apart.

to a Jain temple did a knowledgeable man present the deeper views and correct a handful of Twain's misconceptions. But considering himself "a representative-at-large for the human race" more than an American, Twain also saw through the exterior and recognized a serene and self-possessed culture with high principles. In Banares he evinced an inner pleasure at the many men and women kneeling prayerfully for hours "while we in America are robbing and murdering."

The poverty nearly suffocated him. He blamed the white man who, in the name of civilization and "the white man's burden," impoverished many peoples in the world. In his book *Mark Twain in India*, Keshav Mutalik noted of Twain's observations: "The white man's tools were whiskey and wine and tobacco offered with the fetters and hanging pole and noose; the white man's world was death and murder coupled with the commandment Thou shalt not kill. Mark Twain angrily said, 'We are obliged to believe that a nation that could look on, unmoved, and see starving or freezing women hanged for stealing twenty-six cents' worth of food or rags, and boys snatched from their mothers and men from their families and sent to the other side of the world for long terms of years for similar trifling offenses, was a nation to whom the term "civilized" could not in any large way be applied.' The result of 'civilization' was the extermination of the

savages: 'There are many humorous things in the world—among them the white man's notion that he is less savage than the savages.'

Being such an avid critic of society, any society, right from the beginning of his literary career, Twain moved forward to a sort of personal study of human life. In India he had anticipated a world of beauty and peace. Indeed, when he landed in Colombo, Sri Lanka, en route to Bombay, his first impression was "Dear me, it is beautiful! A sumptuous tropical, as to character of foliage and opulence of it." But praise all too soon turned to cynicism when he saw a group of school girls, Sinhalese Christians "Europeanly dressed" and coming out of a missionary school. He thought their clothes ugly, "destitute of taste, destitute of grace, repulsive as a shroud" and preferred aloud the simple, colorful and more natural native garb.

In all, his cynicism of Western society and piety grew deeper as he traveled around the world. He returned to America noticeably disenchanted, a man who wrote his most stinging observations in *What is Man?* and *The Mysterious Stranger*. It is all the more remarkable that he wrote cheerfully and with great humor about India and her peoples, that he was able to watch dobies laundering their master's clothes at the river and inquire: "Are they trying to break those stones with clothes?"

Of India itself he eloquently summed up

his three months of exploration: "Nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the Sun visits on his round. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked."

Toward the end of his journey, tired and full, he wrote a friend, "I have been sick a good deal; the rest not so much. We have had a good time in India—we couldn't ask for better. There are lovely people here. They made us feel at home."

Readers who would like to enjoy the entire account of Twain's Indian experience can do no better than search out the two books below. One is his final product, rich with illustrations, the very book that made it possible to pay off the debtors who inspired the trip in the first place. It is full of stories, wonderful stories, and of observations that are as true today as they were 100 years back.

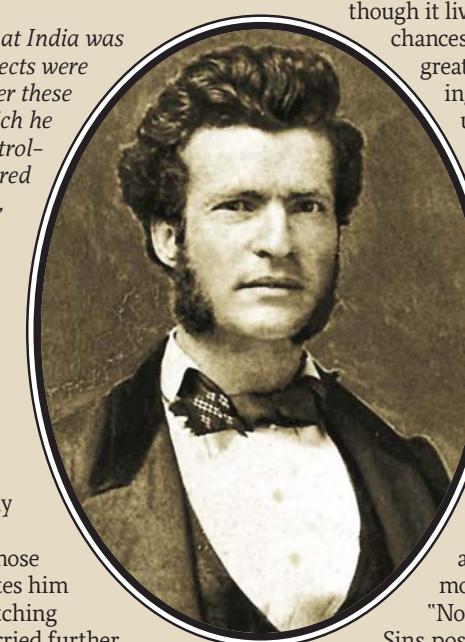
The second is a short analysis of Twain's tour, a look behind the scenes. The more ambitious may wish to contact the world's greatest collection of the man's life and works: The *Mark Twain Papers*, which is a full department within the library of the University of California at Berkeley.

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A Remedy for Sin

Mark Twain knew from extensive reading that India was a place where moral and philosophical subjects were welcome. Since it was his penchant to ponder these matters, he devised a preposterous plan which he presented to Indian audiences whose uncontrollable mirth contrasted with but never shattered the serious demeanor of the man. We share, in brief, Twain's Moral Regeneration of the Whole Human Race Scheme.

I HAVE GOT A SCHEME FOR THE MORAL regeneration of the human race which I hope I can make effective, but I can't tell yet. But I know it is planned out upon strictly scientific lines and is up to date in that particular. I propose to do for the moral fabric just what advanced medical art is doing for the physical body. To protect a healthy person forever from smallpox, hydrophobia, diphtheria and so on, the doctor gives him those very diseases—in a harmless form—incubates him with them—and he's safe then from ever catching them again. That great idea is going to be carried further and further. Fifty years from now the doctors will be inoculating for every conceivable disease. They will take the healthy baby out of the cradle and punch it and slash it and scarify it and load it up



with the whole of the 1,644 diseases (those known to be fearful) that constitute their stock in trade—and that child will be a spectacle to look at. But no matter; it will be sick a couple of weeks, and after that, though it live to be a hundred, it can never be sick again. The chances are that that child will never die at all. In that great day there won't be any doctors anymore—noting but inoculators—and here and there a perishing undertaker.

"Now then, I propose to inoculate for Sin. Suppose that every time you commit a transgression, a crime of any kind, you lay up in your heart a memory of the shame you felt when your Sin found you out, and so make it a perpetual reminder and perpetual protection against your ever committing that particular Sin again. That is to say, inoculate yourself forever against that particular Sin. Now what must be the result? Why this—logically and infallibly: that the more crimes you commit (and forever amen) the richer you become, morally; and when you have committed all the trespasses, all the crimes that are known to the calendar of Sin, there you stand, white as an angel, pure as the driven Snow, the sky-kissing monument of moral perfection.

"Now is this a thing difficult? No. There are only 354 Sins possible—that's all you can commit—that's all there are; you can't invent any fresh ones—that's all been attended to. Now what is 354 Sins? It's very easy work. It's nothing—anybody can do it. I know, I have done it myself."



C-SPAN

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Satguru Delivers Opening Prayer For US House of Representatives

Publisher of HINDUISM TODAY, invited as Guest Chaplain, invokes God's grace for wise leadership and advocates the Hindu ideal of nonviolence

ON JUNE 4, 2013, SATGURU BODHINATHA VEYLANSWAMI became the first Hindu monk and only the third Hindu in history to deliver the opening prayer before the US House of Representatives. The prayer is given each day the House is in session, immediately after it opens for business and before the Pledge of Allegiance. Bodhinatha's one-day service as Guest Chaplain was cosponsored by Rep. Ed Royce (R) of California's 39th district and Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard (D) of Hawaii's 2nd district. Rep. Royce, now in his 11th term, is a conservative Republican from Southern California and chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee; Rep. Gabbard is the first Hindu elected to the US Congress, and her district includes Kauai Aadheenam, home of HINDUISM TODAY.

According to the House Chaplain's office, the prayer has four rules: it can only be 150 words long, it has to be entirely in English and it can mention neither any particular political issue of the day nor the national holiday of another country. Bodhinatha offered: "May today's session of the House of Representatives, to which Americans rightly turn for

leadership, be abundantly blessed by the Lord Supreme. Through personal introspection, a collaborative heart and by God's all-pervasive grace, may the members present here, despite differing views and staunchly held convictions, find the wisdom to craft mutually acceptable solutions to our nation's challenges.

"The tragic Boston Marathon bombings, still vivid in all our minds, implore us to advocate the humanity of a nonviolent approach in all of life's dimensions. Hindu scripture declares, without equivocation, that the highest of high ideals is to never knowingly harm



HOUSE CHAPLAIN'S OFFICE

anyone. May we here in this chamber, and all the people of our great nation, endeavor to face even our greatest difficulties with an unwavering commitment to seek out and to find nonviolent solutions. Peace, peace, peace to us, and peace to all beings."

Representative Royce then thanked Bodhinatha from the House floor for his "opening prayer and for gracing us with the same spirit that guides the Hindu belief."

HAF's DC Days

The invitation came through the work of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), a prominent US advocacy group. It coincided with HAF's tenth annual Advocacy Day, during which they met personally with individual

Day of blessing: (counter-clockwise from top) Bodhinatha gives the prayer from the House podium; with Rep. Royce and the House Chaplain, Reverend Patrick J. Conroy, S.J.; HAF executive Council, Board and staff with Bodhinatha; Speaker Pro Tempore, Rep. Steve Womack of Arkansas, formally opens the House for business



members of Congress and hosted a well-attended evening reception. During those events, they conveyed HAF's concerns and recommendations regarding the deplorable treatment of Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh and the pending immigration reform bill now before Congress. Each office was provided a copy of HAF's annual Human Rights Report, available at bit.ly/HAF_HRR, which details human rights violations against Hindus in ten countries.

"Our government leaders are hearing from Hindu Americans in a sustained, consistent way for the last decade, and the results are showing," said Suhag Shukla, Esq., HAF's Executive Director and Legal Counsel. "Our commitment to the community is to continue these efforts, expand them and usher in a new generation of Hindu-American leaders making a difference in political engagement."

First Hindu Prayers Met with Protest

Bodhinatha's appearance as guest chaplain attracted none of the controversy of the first two Hindu prayers, in 2000 and 2007. Those, in fact, attracted such virulent protests from some evangelical Christians as to merit their own entries in Wikipedia: bit.ly/Samuldrala and bit.ly/Rajan_Zed.

The first Hindu guest chaplain was Venkatachalapathi Samuldrala of the Siva-Vishnu Temple of Parma, Ohio, who gave the prayer in the House chambers on September 14, 2000. The Family Research Council denounced his appearance as, "One more indication that our nation is drifting from its Judeo-Christian roots.... Alas, in our day, when 'tolerance' and 'diversity' have replaced the Ten Commandments as the only remaining absolute dictums, it has become necessary to 'celebrate' non-Christian religions—even in the halls of Congress.... Our founders expected that Christianity—and no other religion—would receive support from the government

as long as that support did not violate people's consciences and their right to worship. They would have found utterly incredible the idea that all religions, including paganism, be treated with equal deference. Many people today confuse traditional Western religious tolerance with religious pluralism. The former embraces biblical truth while allowing for freedom of conscience, while the latter assumes all religions are equally valid, resulting in moral relativism and ethical chaos.... As for our Hindu priest friend, the United States is a nation that has historically honored the One True God. Woe be to us on that day when we relegate Him to being merely one among countless other deities in the pantheon of theologies."

Protests against Rajan Zed's appearance as guest chaplain in the US Senate began even before he gave the prayer on July 12, 2007. Among others, the prominent Christian historian David Barton said he wondered "why the US government is seeking the invocation of a non-monotheistic God. Since Hindus worship multiple Gods, the prayer will be completely outside the American paradigm, flying in the face of the American motto 'One Nation Under God'."

As Zed began his prayer on the 12th, Ante Pavkovic of Operation Save America shouted from the Senate gallery, "Lord Jesus, forgive us, Father, for allowing a prayer of the wicked, which is an abomination in your sight. This is an abomination. We shall have no other gods before You. Lord Jesus, have mercy on our nation for allowing this abomination, this idolatry, for violating the First Commandment 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' God forgive our nation, in Jesus name, Amen." Pavkovic was immediately arrested, along with his wife and daughter who shouted similar protests in an astounding breach of protocol (not to mention the law) for the traditionally staid Senate chambers.

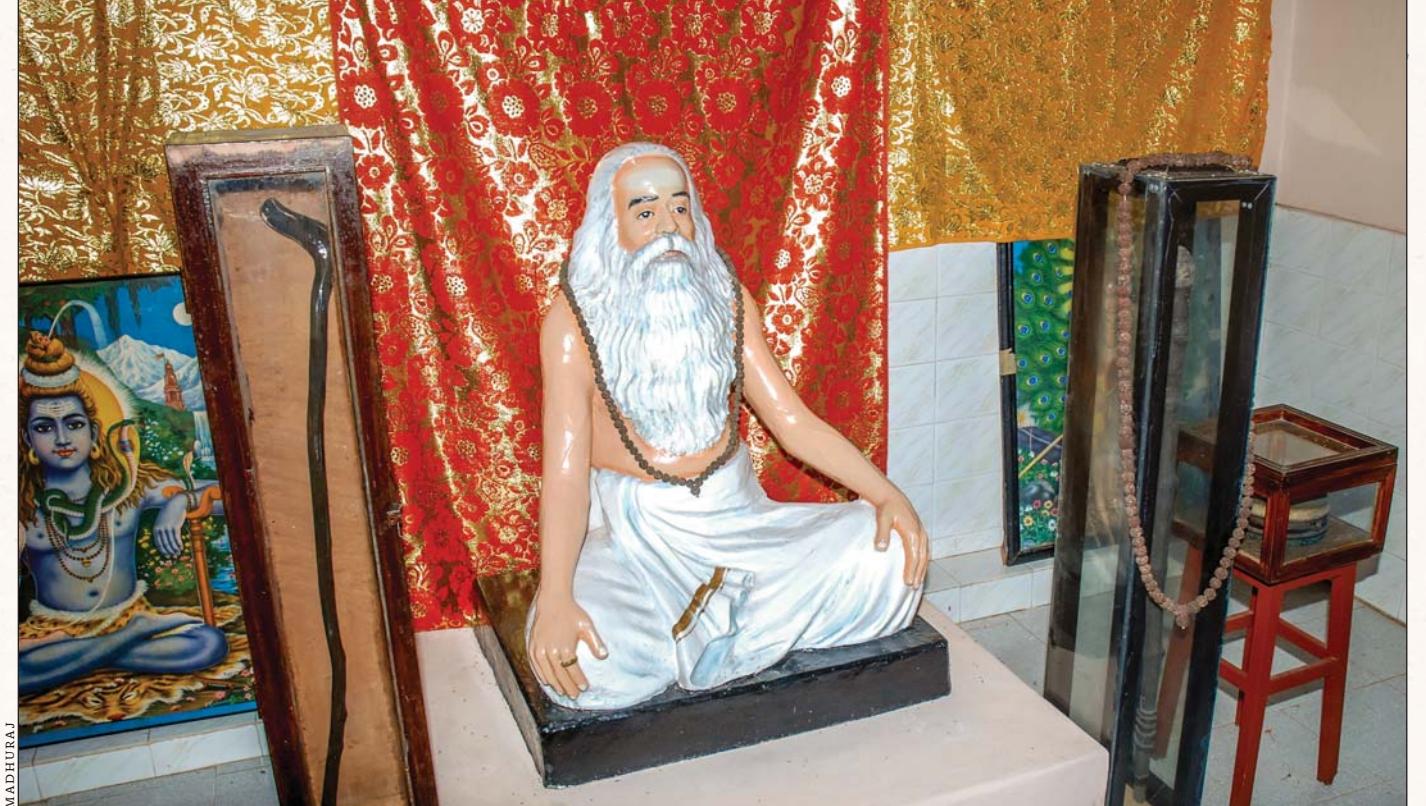
Operation Save America's director, Rev. Flip Benham, later issued a statement as to why the Pavkavics broke the law rather than protest peacefully. "Our answer is, when one stands up in the face of gross idolatry being allowed in the Senate, in the chamber of the United States Senate, it is incumbent on a Christian to stand up and speak the truth. No matter what, we must obey God rather than men. When you stand up and are arrested, and the Hindu is allowed to go free, this country has gone upside-down."

Bodhinatha's appearance attracted no known protest or controversy, but rather was warmly complimented by the Congressional representatives and their staff—indeed all who heard it. Suhag Shukla observed, "The

fact that there were no hateful hecklers, protests, or vehement condemnations, as there were during the remarks of the two past Hindu guest chaplains, is indeed encouraging. Was it the result of some level of acceptance and assimilation of Hinduism in America or the overall recognition that representatives of all religions or none have a right to offer legislative prayer or wisdom? One can't be certain, but can certainly take it as a positive sign, whatever the reason."

Bodhinatha himself, when asked, suggested, "Perhaps the two organizations who protested in the past—Family Research Council and Operation Save America—as well as similar conservative Christian organizations, came to the conclusion that taking a strong stand against non-Christian prayers in Congress was not a position which resonated well with many Americans and was best dropped."

The video of Bodhinatha's prayer and Rep. Royce's speech can be seen at <http://bit.ly/Cspan-Bodhi>.



MADHURAJ

GURUS

Chattampi Swami's Long Shadow

The 19th-century Kerala saint instigated reform, inspired his disciple Narayana Guru and directly influenced Swamis Vivekananda and Chinmayananda

BY G.K. NAIR, KERALA

A BROAD FOREHEAD SMEARED WITH holy ash, eyebrows expressing un- daunted courage, eyes flowing with kindness and consideration, a face that bespoke friendliness and amiability, a beautiful flowing silvery beard, a broad and muscular chest, long hands, speech that was sweet, full of meaning, soft and gentle, and murmuring with rhythm"—such was the great Kerala Saint Chattampi Swami as described by his biographer. The 19th-century teacher broke down caste inequality while reestablishing the traditional Saiva philosophy of Kerala. He argued for rights of women, equal access to education and removal of any restrictions on temple entry. It is a quirk of history that he is less well known even inside Kerala than his disciple Narayana Guru, whose influence remains strong to this day.

Early Life

Vidhyadhiraja Parama Bhattacharya Chattampi Swami, as he is formally called, was born Kunjan Pillai on August 25, 1853, in Thiruvananthapuram, then the seat of power of the Travancore Kingdom and today the capital of Kerala. His father, Vasudeva Sharma, was

of the Nambudiri brahmin caste (which dominated Kerala society at the time) and his mother a lower-caste Nair. In one of the matrilineal marriage systems peculiar to Kerala, the eldest son in a brahmin family could marry a brahmin lady; but the younger sons could only take a wife from the Nair caste. The husband and wife did not live together, and the children were not admitted to the family of their father but were raised by their mother and her brothers—a practice called hypergamy. Kunjan's family was indigent, and two of his siblings died from malnutrition.

A bright child, Kunjan was admitted to a local gurukulam where, along with Tamil, Malayalam, mathematics and music, he learned Sanskrit—despite the prohibition on low-caste people doing so. Because he was older than most of the students, he was put in charge of them and given the name *Chattampi*, "monitor," which stuck with him throughout his life. He left school at 15 to earn money to support his mother, becoming a "headload worker" carrying bricks, sand, etc., at a state construction site. He soon got a better job as a title deed writer, then as a clerk. At 18 he returned to the same build-

ing he helped build as a laborer, this time as an accountant for the Diwan. He left this job in 1871 and started associating with educated religious people, including a sannyasin named Subramanya, who taught him a mantra. After days of chanting, austerity and penance as advised by Subramanya, he felt himself and appeared to others a different man. Henceforth he tended toward the life of a sannyasin and spent five years living and studying Saiva Siddhanta and Vedanta with Sri Subba Jadapadigal, a famed scholar of South India.

The Search for His Guru

In 1874 Chattampi became a student of Ayyavu Swami, who instructed him in yoga, Vedanta, Tamil Saivite philosophy and other South Indian schools of thought. He also studied with other saints and scholars of Kerala, even for a time with a Christian priest and later a Muslim Sufi mystic. Finally, he left Kerala to wander through South India in search of his guru.

Sometime in 1881 he arrived in the village of Vadaveesvaam in the modern Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu, at the southern tip of India. There he encountered an



Remembering the guru: (left) Chattampi Swami's walking stick, drum and mala on display next to his statue at his samadhi shrine in Panmana; (above) flag is raised to open the 2013 Hindumatha Parishat, held yearly by the Hindumatha Maha Mandalam on the Pampa River in honor of Chattampi Swami. At the centenary event, in 2012, Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami was a guest of honor.

old beggar on the side of the road picking food off banana-leaf plates which had been tossed out on the street for the cows to eat after a feast. He was sharing the leftovers with a pack of village dogs. Some boys started throwing stones at the old man, but he paid them no mind. Convinced he had encountered no ordinary beggar, Chattampi approached the man, who immediately fled into the forest outside the village. Chattampi followed him to a hilltop, where the old man disappeared. The exhausted Chattampi fell asleep on the spot.

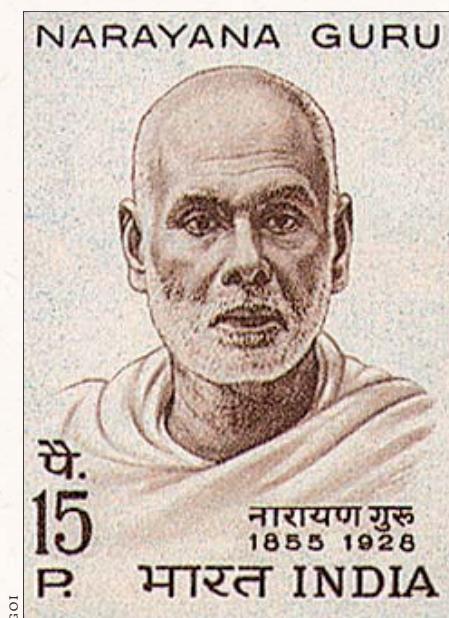
When he woke in the morning, his head was in the lap of the beggar. Chattampi Swami later recalled that the man said, "My dear son, you have already traveled far along the way of truth." They lived off what they could find in the forest while the old man taught him the way to God realization. After just a few days, the old man left Chattampi to meditate upon what he had been taught. The old man never returned; but from that short experience, Chattampi was a changed person. He had achieved nirvikalpa samadhi and become a jivanmukti, one who is liberated from rebirth. He was 28 years old.

People immediately sensed the change and started addressing him with great reverence as Chattampi Swami. Upon his return to Kerala, Nanu Asan, two years younger than he, became his disciple and was given the name Narayana Guru. Together the two set about initiating a Hindu renaissance in Kerala. Narayana Guru came from the Ezhava caste—like the Nairs, a major group in Kerala. Between them they could impact a large por-

tion of the population.

His Influence

During his lifetime, Chattampi Swami met and influenced future leaders of India. Swami Vivekananda, ten years his junior, came to him with questions about meditation. Chattampi later recounted that Vivekananda said, "You have explained well. Now, I can



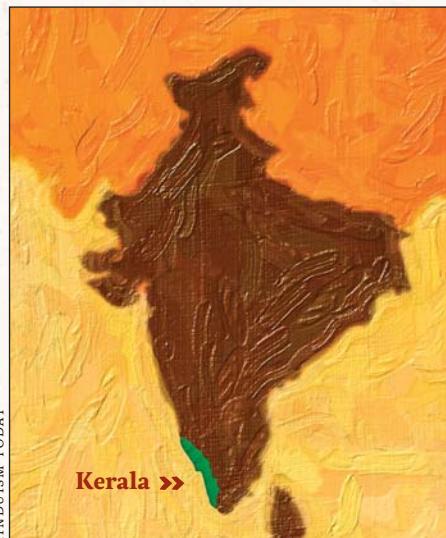
Kerala saint: In 1967, the Government of India honored Chattampi Swami's chief disciple with this stamp

understand. I have traveled from Bengal to these southernmost parts of India. I have met many sadhus and sannyasins. I asked the same to them. But till now I could not get satisfactory answers." Vivekananda took both of Chattampi Swami's hands and placed them on his head in an expression of respect.

The story of Kerala-born Swami Chinmayananda, founder of Chinmaya Mission, is far more unusual, and best related in his own words: "It must have been in the early twenties; I only have a very dim, vague memory. And yet, the flashes that rise in my bosom are unfailingly clear. They have been my silent inspiration. They have helped me more often than I dare to confess.

"It cannot be explained because it all happened when I was only three or perhaps four years old. I remember the unique smell of the long, white beard, the rough hairy chest, and the rounded soft belly. This I remember clearly of Sri Chattampi Swami, in the early 1920s. He used to be a regular visitor to our house in Ernakulam, and my mother tells me it was his usual practice to lay me on his chest and lie down on a cot and prattle away to me. Mother told me that I in my turn used to prattle back, and thus long periods of quiet communication used to be there between the great sage and me, an innocent child. As I was being rocked up and down in a vertical position, Swami was in the habit of rolling his head at the neck from right to left. All those who knew him, can remember this happy pose of the unique Master. It was this simple picture, drawn in my memory that did often return, again and again, to help me in the path of my life. It contained for me a testimony, a testament and an evergreen hope, all in one, for all times.

"One day my mother asked Swami, 'What exactly are you telling to that baby, and what is the language you both use?' To this Swami answered, 'He understands it all, why do you



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interfere with us?"
"These are all the reminiscences that I can report. Is it all true? Is there communication possible between a silver-bearded Master and an uninitiated infant? Whatever else there might have been in my early life, there was no spirituality or religion apparently evident; and yet twenty-five years ago, when I was in my early twenties, I can look back now and declare that suddenly, from nowhere, a spiritual urge and a religious hunger took me by storm, and in one tidal-wave sustained me for ten short years in Uttara Kasi, only to leave me back, again, on the shores of the Indian Hindu metropolis, to preach, to serve and to convert the Hindus to Hinduism."

Scholastic Work

Chattampi Swami continued his scholastic endeavors throughout his life and wrote many books. He is remembered most for establishing, through reference to scriptures such as the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the eligibility of all, irrespective of caste or sex, to study the teachings of the *Vedas*. Up to this time, scholarship itself was considered the province only of brahmins. Study of the *Vedas* in particular was forbidden to sudras, the caste to which Swami himself belonged. His reasoning with regard to Vedic study was published in a book, *Vedadikara Nirupanam*, in 1918. It is his most important work. A later disciple of Narayana Guru commented on reading the book, "It is our luck that it was not banned [by the British], so revolutionary was its content, like a bomb placed in that era's world of social discrimination."

Swami's next book, *Advaita Chinthapaddhati*, was written in simple language to teach Vedanta and practical advaita to ordinary people having no knowledge of Sanskrit. A third book, *Jivakarunya Nirupanam*, on nonviolence and vegetarianism, quotes

not only Hindu tradition but also the opinions of Newman, Milton, Pythagoras, Isaac Newton, Robert Bell, Darwin, Christian saints and others on nonvegetarian food.

In 1913 Swami published a very different book, *Pracheena Malayalam* ("Ancient Malayalam"), a historical work which sought to refute the claim to supremacy of the Nambudiri brahmins. Understandably, this book was not well received by that community. A main point was that the Nair community of Kerala were originally followers of Saiva Siddhanta (still strong in Tamil Nadu), which is quite different from the Mimamsa philosophical system of the Nambudiris.

In another book, *Christumata Saram and Christumata Schethanam* ("Summary and Critique of Christianity"), Swami summarized the Christian *Bible* and analyzed its illogical aspects and faulty statements. The book went a long way toward curtailing the conversion efforts of the missionaries. Oddly enough, it is kept in print today by a Christian publishing house and is popular among Kerala Christians.

Swami taught that the role of women in society is important. He said it is only the foolish that believe "*Na stree swatantryamarthathi*" ("A woman does not deserve freedom"). It is unjust, he emphasized, and against all laws to keep her bonded, ignorant and as a machine for producing children. It is also wrong to consider that man can do any injustice he likes to a woman and that only he has the power to rule. But, Swami taught, this does not mean that men should leave their occupations and remain at home for child rearing. Both should understand the unique roles which each has to fulfill.

His Disciples

Chattampi Swami initiated a few disciples into sannyas but made no systematic effort to set up ashrams to perpetuate his work.

Legacy today: (left) map of India showing location of Kerala on India's lush southwestern coast; (above) entry to the main Theerthapada Ashram in Vazhoor; (right) the ashram's famous goshala

He rarely even settled in one place, traveling constantly. Narayana Guru was the only person he spent extended periods with. He would not handle money; and when given 100 acres of valuable land in Kodanad for an ashram or school, he gifted it to a disciple to "put to good use." The Theerthapada Ashrams established by his disciples, are, with some exceptions, relatively inactive today.

For this article HINDUISM TODAY visited two Theerthapada ashrams. One is located in Kollam district, at a place where Chattampi Swami installed a Siva Lingam. It is looked after by Swami Vageesananda Theerthapada. The second, and main, Theerthapada Ashram (pictured above), located in Vazhoor, is headed by Swami Prajnananda Theerthapada. It has 17 acres of land, with farms and a goshala with 80 cows and calves. With income from its rubber tree plantation, it sustains other Theerthapada ashrams in need of support. It has a library and reading room and is engaged in publishing the writings of Chattampi Swamigal and his disciples. Unfortunately, the Theerthapada ashrams lack the modern facilities of others in Kerala and are neglected even by the Nair community. One resident said he doubted the present generation of Nairs even know the name Chattampi Swami.

Swami Prajnananda lamented the state of today's society. "We seldom find children having an inherent liking for spiritualism and religion. This may be because of the changed lifestyles of parents who are in the clutches of the modern Western culture of materialism. In pursuit of that, the parents have lost the spiritual and religious tradi-



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tions and values. Consequently, the children born to them neither come with any inherent spiritual qualities nor learn any prudent values. In addition to this selfishness and the resultant greed for wealth to satisfy their material pleasures, the majority of the youths lack an aptitude and/or mind for serving the God by serving the fellow human beings."

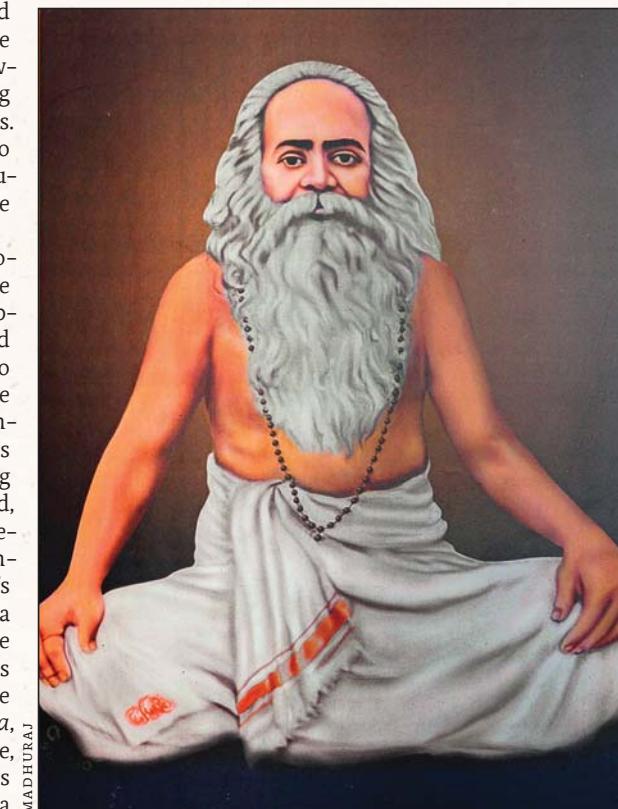
When asked what Chattampi Swamigal would say if he were alive today, Prajnananda Swami responded, "He would be sorrowing to see the violent and wicked nature of the people, especially the Hindus who are relegated to the lower levels of spiritualism, abandoning their culture, traditions and values. He would have made a clarion call to the mothers to come forward to educate and guide their children in the righteous path."

Vaikom Vivekanandan, an octogenarian and staunch devotee of the Swami, said one problem is the absence of Nair leaders who understand Chattampi Swami's exhortations to extricate the community from "the clutches of the upper-caste brahmins." He said most of the brahmins are Vaishnavites. In order to bring the Nairs into their fold, he narrated, they first introduced the idea of seeing Siva and Vishnu together. Instead of learning Chattampi Swami's Advaita Vedanta derived from Saiva Siddhanta, the people absorbed the message of Vaishnavism, which was spread through popularization of the *Bhagavatha Purana*, *Bhagavad Gita*, etc. Thus over a long period of time, the Nairs, who were mainly Saivites in the past, moved away from Saiva Siddhanta; though a good number of Ezhavas, following Narayana Guru,

remained followers of Advaita Vedanta.

Legacy

The role played by Chattampi Swami in the history of Kerala has not yet been seriously assessed. While the Ezhava community has reverently accepted his disciple Narayana Guru as their spiritual preceptor, the Nair community did not follow suit with Chattampi Swami. One reason was his sharp criti-



Chattampi Swami: All images and art of Swami appear to be derived from a single photograph

icism of the Nambudiri brahmin community, which did not sit well with Nairs whose fathers were brahmins (like his own). Consequently, the rich contributions made by him for the uplift of all the oppressed communities and the women of Kerala did not reach the people as they might have.

The movements initiated by him for social and religious reforms did make some progress in weeding out the age-old caste-based hierarchical social structures in the state, where not only the brahmins, but also the Nairs and Ezhavas, played according to their own divisive rules.

After seven decades, the sage left his body at the time and place decided by him in advance and merged with Siva. This was on May 5, 1924, in the village of Panmana, while under the care of two close disciples. His samadhi shrine (burial place) is established at the Panmana Ashram.

Recently the Nair Service Society, which represents many of the state's Nairs, has asked all their village units, numbering about 6,000, to display the picture of Chattampi Swami in their offices as their spiritual guru. Those who understand Swami's life believe that had people more closely followed what he taught about social equality, empowerment of women, nonviolence, compassion and love for all living creatures, protection of environment and, above all, the philosophy of pure Saiva Advaita, the present generation would be the better for it.

THE BOOK *CHATTAMPI SWAMI: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY*, THE MAIN RESOURCE ON HIS LIFE, MAY BE ORDERED AT SOUARNIKA.ORG



P R E S E R V A T I O N

Nepalese Fight for Their Beloved Trees

Kathmandu's Ring Road improvement and inner city street-widening projects run into a roadblock as protesters turn every tree into a sacred shrine

By SALLY ACHARYA, KATHMANDU

THE TREES FALLING TO CHAINSAWS along Kathmandu's roads are old and stately, but the protesters' tools are thousands of years older: sacred thread, vermillion powder and flowers.

Residents and others are alarmed because thousands of huge old trees are being cut down in two major and simultaneous road improvement projects and—despite promises—none is being replanted. The expansion of the Ring Road is planned and funded by China, while roads inside the city are being widened in a separate project of the Nepali government based on a plan from the 1970s.

The Ring Road itself was built in the 1970s, and in an example of successful environmental abatement the Chinese planted many roadside shade trees which grew tall and magnificent in their maturity. These days, though, the Ring Road is clogged with traffic. China is granting Nepal roughly \$6.7 million (547 million Nepali rupees) to expand it, on condition that a Chinese contractor be used.

The planning was done by a Chinese team. Alarmingly, sketches in the Road Department office indicate no trees or greenbelt.

Adding to residents' alarm is the ongoing digging, tree-cutting and wall-breaking that has filled the city with debris as part of another road improvement plan, the Urban Development Implementation Act of 1977.

This ambitious, massive plan to broaden the roads and reduce traffic bottlenecks, long delayed due to the reluctance of previous governments, was finally set into motion by the Maoist-led administration of Baburam Bhattarai, who left office in March. The work is continuing under the interim government.

But over the intervening decades, many residents unknowingly built shops and homes on lands the Act had earmarked for road work. The ditches and mounds that Kathmandu residents have been stepping around for months are filled with rubble from these shops and homes. In many cases homeowners have demolished and rebuilt their own walls rather than waiting for the

road crews. Whole lines of shops and homes have pulled back from the streets, their exterior walls destroyed and rebuilt. Temples have been moved after suitable pujas. Trees can't shrink back from the expanding asphalt, so they've simply been chopped down.

Plea for Eco-Sensitive Development

Few question the need for better roads in congested Kathmandu, with its narrow lanes and helter-skelter development. But many are skeptical of the planning for the projects, fearing there will soon be little greenery left in this city, where smog hides the Himalayas and people have taken to wearing face masks because of rampant pollution.

So the Nepalese are trying to stop the bulldozers with sacred thread. Many of Kathmandu's trees are now blessed with sindoor, circled with thread and painted with messages as activists urge respect for what they see as two aligned ideals: the traditional sense of sacred nature and contemporary eco-sensitive development.



ALL PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY



Bless our trees: (far left) One local activist smears the tree bark with sandalwood while another encircles it with a sacred thread; (left) incense is offered at the base of this young man's tree which is posted with a yellow printed plea to stop the cutting; (right) sindoor powder from a tapari leaf bowl is thrown upon this tree, whose companion has already been cut down

"Save Me," says a message scrawled on a massive tree whose branches shade a chautari, or seating place, between a vegetable market and an area known as Tibetan Camp. Bulldozers have carved up the road around it, turning the local hangout into an island in the mud but leaving the thread-encircled giant alone for now.

"Save Me," plead the words scrawled on trees along the Ring Road, some of the 1,239 trees marked for destruction along the southern arc of the city's 17-mile beltway.

Protesters are asking for a halt until they see a plan that makes an effort to save those trees that can be saved, ensures walkways and bicycle lanes, and follows legal and traditional precepts for planting more trees than are cut.

"It's always been said it's a sin to cut trees,"

said Sampurna Basnet, a college student at a recent protest where environmentalists arrived with powder-filled tapari (bowls made of leaves) and Buddhist prayer flags.

"Birds are messengers of the Gods. Why would we take away their homes?" asked artist Milan Rai, who has been placing paper butterflies on endangered trees in a message of hope for positive transformation. "When people cut trees, they always used to plant more. We've always been nature worshipers. Now everybody is forgetting the connection. In the name of development, we're becoming self-destructive."

Over the past few months hundreds of young people have marched repeatedly to the Road Department bearing saplings, pledging to nurture them and asking the government

to do the same for Kathmandu's existing trees. They've also built a model bicycle path, using gravel and their own labor, to demonstrate their vision of positive development. It's an intentionally peaceful and nonpartisan gesture in this often strike-crippled and politicized city, where the movement to save the trees has been unusual in many ways, not the least of which has been chants such as, "Are we part of an organization? No!"

Urging Respect for Nepal's Heritage

One common thread in this informal, often Facebook-driven effort has been a vision of development that doesn't repeat the mistakes of other countries but modernizes in a way that respects the environment and Nepal's heritage.

In Nepali culture, planting trees and creating chautari where people can rest under the shade has long been a way to earn merit. The Vedas are full of invocations to the earth (bhū), atmosphere (bhuvah), sky (sva) and the primordial forces of nature. Sacred trees and plants are numerous; and while certain trees are particularly sacred, such as the spreading banyan and peepal trees, all trees are recognized as valuable and connected with Vishnu, the Preserver. Watering trees is seen as a spiritual duty, and those who cut down trees must plant more.

In some villages trees are worshiped in the month of Baisakh (April-May) with the creation of temporary temples under a tree to ask for rain. The people say that if trees are cut, the rains won't come. In recent de-

cades chautari have been leveled for roads all across the country, with little effort to save the old trees that once formed the heart of village life. This, while Nepal's news and even its school textbooks are packed with information on global warming and the importance of saving the environment. Protesters cite the irony of so many trees being cut in a capital city that is full of donor agencies, embassies and policy makers who urge Nepalis to become environmentally aware.

"What do we study in school?" twelfth grader Bijeta Bhandari asked a crowd at a recent rally. "The environment! Does the government have us study it because it's important? Yes! Then what kind of example is this?"

The effort to save the trees began quietly last year as a beloved line of old trees near the zoo fell to chainsaws and roadwork approached a nearby khari tree that serves as a neighborhood landmark. Many Kathmandu neighborhoods, though tight-packed and urbanized, have their own giant trees where elders chat in the shade and youth clubs gather for sports. Some are sacred pipal and banyan trees; some are not. But they're part of the urban landscape of Greater Kathmandu, along with the jacaranda that bloom purple in the spring and the tall trees that soften the dust-and-concrete grimness of the Ring Road.

"What I really love about those trees is that they have so many functions," says Lucia deVries, a 21-year Nepali resident who lives near the Ring Road and helped organize the earliest protests. "They're community parks. Shops are based under the trees—the tailors,



ALL PHOTOS: THOMAS KELLY



Tree haven: (left) reporter Sally Acharya interviews a protester; (right) a roadside peepal tree shrine in Handi Gaun

the fruit sellers—and there are always boys playing football and table tennis. If you go to a place with no trees, people aren't hanging out. Stretches with no trees are like barren places. They're ugly."

Questions about Health and Livability

Controversies rage. The government has been accused of ignoring private property rights, questions have been raised about who benefits financially from wood sold after chopping trees, and the dust in the air from demolition is linked to an increase in asthma and respiratory ailments. But many also admire the government's ability to muster the political will after so many decades of inaction on the roads. And there's little criticism of the ultimate goal: clearer, wider, less dusty streets. The protesters agree with that, too. The question is how to go about it and what a livable city would look like in the long run.

"We don't want development that's all about concrete and overpasses. That's not our definition of development. We need ways for small children and grandmothers to walk and ride bicycles," said protester Sail Shrestha. "All around the world, people are saying, 'Oh no, we made a mistake here.' They're trying to come back to be like Nepal was. We shouldn't follow their mistakes."

Government Promises to Plant

Ashok Tiwari, who heads up both projects in

the Lalitpur area, says his Road Department will replant four trees for each tree cut. It's a Hindu tradition long enshrined by law in Nepal, although Tiwari says the law only applies these days to forest land and the Road Department isn't legally required to replant.

After a day in which he got so many messages on his cell phone that "I couldn't even breathe," Tiwari said he spoke to the Chinese contractors and they agreed to mark the route publicly so citizens would know which trees are to be cut. That would also theoretically prevent illegal cutting of other trees in the name of roadwork. But as of this writing that has not happened, even though its commencement has been announced.

Inside the city, too, Tiwari promises that trees will be replaced eventually, although the pavement has already been laid. "We can tear up the pavement stones. It's just sand under there. It's not hard," he says.

Planting New Trees Just Makes Sense

But after a year in which many neighborhoods have seen trees cut and no replanting, and in the general atmosphere of skepticism about government pledges and dismay about the charmless concrete that is spreading in the historic city, the protesters want more than words. They recently marched to the Chinese Embassy to ask its support in ensuring that the Shanghai contractors deliver a more walkable, contemporary, eco-friendly

city design. After all, noted DeVries, it was China who initially funded the planting of many of the popular Ring Road trees. "They did such a great job then," she says. "That's the approach we need to see now."

Many feel this approach would preserve cultural and spiritual values as well as the environment. "We need so many things from trees throughout our lives," says 11th-grader Lirona Joshi. "With our first breath, we take their oxygen. We need their leaves for ceremonies, and when we die, we need their wood to be burned. Our elders planted trees, but now, instead of planting trees, we are cutting them. That is senseless."

Older people sympathize with the protesters. Govinda Bahadur Karki, who spent 12 years in the Middle East, said the protesters have a better sense of real "development" and "modernization" than the tree cutters. "It doesn't save money to cut trees," he said. "If we go to the hospital because we're breathing polluted air, don't we have to pay money?"

Trees are good for business, added Ge-hendra Raj Koirala. Shops do more business when people come to enjoy the nearby shade. "We need development, and if a tree is really in the way of the road, it must be cut. But we need to save as many as we can. And we need to replant as we did in the past—big trees, not saplings. It takes many years for trees to get this big. If our generation cuts the trees, what will they think of us in the future?"



OPINION

The Amazing Impact of Indians on America

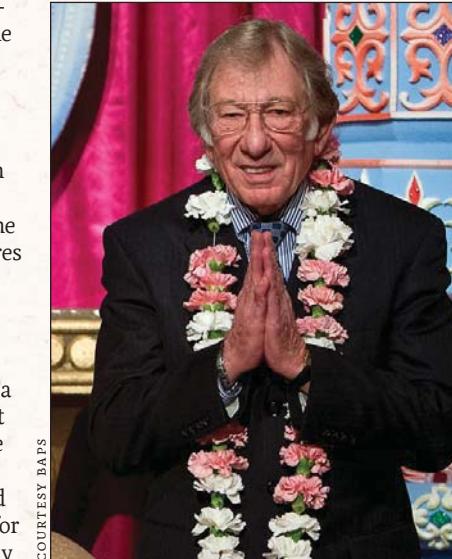
The mayor of a prominent Houston suburb shares his observations

BY LEONARD SCARCELLA

AS A DESCENDANT OF ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS, and a careful observer of the impact of the various cultures on our society, I'm aware of the many hurdles and travails which confront new arrivals in our country, as certainly it had a very telling influence on my ancestors. I am convinced that when the history books are written, they will point to the Indians as one of the most adaptable and successful cultures ever to come ashore in this great country.

Tremendous credit must go to a culture who entered the USA with what most regarded as almost insurmountable odds stacked against them and demonstrated in a fashion many considered improbable, if not impossible—through commitment to some of the most treasured American principles, as well as those ingrained in their imported culture—that it need not take generations for a new group of immigrants to weave its way into this country's fabric.

COURTESY BAPS



educational achievements into an approach that has amazed a whole host of observers. In a nutshell, many of these immigrants coming here with impressive credentials, such as an electrical engineering or accounting degrees, opt to become small business entrepreneurs, foregoing the opportunity to take a good job with a major corporation. Why? The answer is simple. These jobs have their limits, such as advancing within the company above certain levels. Contrast that with owning a business, such as a convenience store, working 100 or more hours a week, with success and advancement determined by hard work and ingenuity. Not only have thousands taken this career path since immigrating, they have surprised even themselves with their accomplishments, in many instances not only making their first endeavor an overwhelmingly profitable achievement, but then parlaying it into an impressive expansion of the business into a chain of similar or varied entities. They clearly illustrate that capitalism has an appeal reaching far beyond multinational corporations.

An inescapable and most compelling component of these immigrants is their fervent commitment to religion. It is almost impossible to get into a full discussion of what makes these people into who they are without an aggressive discourse on how profound an influence their spiritual beliefs command. In many ways their secular pursuits are, if not subordinate to, in the least significantly influenced by the heightened status of their religion. While their faith is splintered between the most prevalent of the religions—Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Hinduism—it is no great surprise that Hinduism predominates. What is highly unusual and something rarely experienced with other cultures exercising their beliefs are the long and storied traditions of Hinduism that have permeated the practices and customs embraced in the ceremonies of the Indians of all these other faiths. This unusual influence is clear and unmistakable and cannot be ignored or overstated.

This commentary would be incomplete without a recognition of the commendable manner in which Indians have injected themselves into the political governing of this country, from the most basic positions of local government—as city council and school board members—to the chief executive officers of state governments. With the first Hindu recently elected to Congress, the President of the United States of America is all that remains. And no one is betting against an ascent to this lofty position in the foreseeable future.

LEONARD SCARCELLA has been the Mayor of the City of Stafford, Texas, since 1969 and sits as President of the Board of Directors of the Fort Bend County Industrial Development Corporation. Email: mayor@cityofstafford.com

Living with Aging Parents

Kindness, compromise and tenacity are daily visitors as I look after my 94-year-old mom

BY DAMARA SHANMUGAN



life to either seek professional care for their parents in a home, or to recreate the joint family—a challenging adventure, as we shall see.

TO ASSIST MY PARENTS, I MOVED BACK TO OUR FAMILY HOME nineteen years ago and worked to fulfill Gurudeva's advice. My father passed away a year later, and I have lived with my mother since. These guidelines, observations and helpful hints have come to light over time.

I converted to Hinduism in 1992 through the namakarana samskara, naming-giving ceremony. My parents are not Hindus. They live by different standards and life-style choices than I do, and this made for a challenging experience. But true service is about the person or persons being served, not about the person doing the serving. Clearly, service is not about imposing our own beliefs, ideals and standards on anyone else; rather, it is about honoring those we serve exactly as they are.

As adult care-giving children, we need all the skills we can acquire for successfully and lovingly dealing with our aging parents. Positive discipline, the art of raising children based on treating each other with dignity and respect, is invaluable. These same positive discipline guidelines, used to raise our children and grandchildren without violence, are perfectly adaptable to all situations and all age groups. The ethical principles called yamas and niyamas can be applied even when aging parents and adult care-giving children are of different religions. Care is needed every day and in every negotiation.

Communication skills are essential and extra care must be taken not to descend in any way. Being in total harmony all of the time takes attention, constant inner vigilance, practice, persistence and patience.

Whether the adult care-giving child comes to live in the home of the aging parent(s) or the aging parent(s) come to live in their child's

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniya-swami, founder of Hinduism Today, always advised his devotees to take care of their aging parents and not leave the job to strangers. Damara Shanmugan, 67, took her guru's advice and has been caring for her mother for 19 years. The following article unpacks her experiences. As more and more Hindus no longer live in joint families where the care of the parents is insured, they, too, may face a decision sometime in their

life to either seek professional care for their parents in a home, or to recreate the joint family—a challenging adventure, as we shall see.

home, the following practical guidelines are basically the same.

1) You are still the child: Age seems to make no difference here. Kindness is needed after an adult care-giving child, age 67, has been reminded for the fourth time in 15 minutes to make sure that the front door is locked. Caring parents of any age seem to always take pleasure in making sure that their children are safe and prepared for any eventuality. Perhaps this keeps the mind of an aging parent keen, active and alert. It is wonderful to be so lovingly looked after.

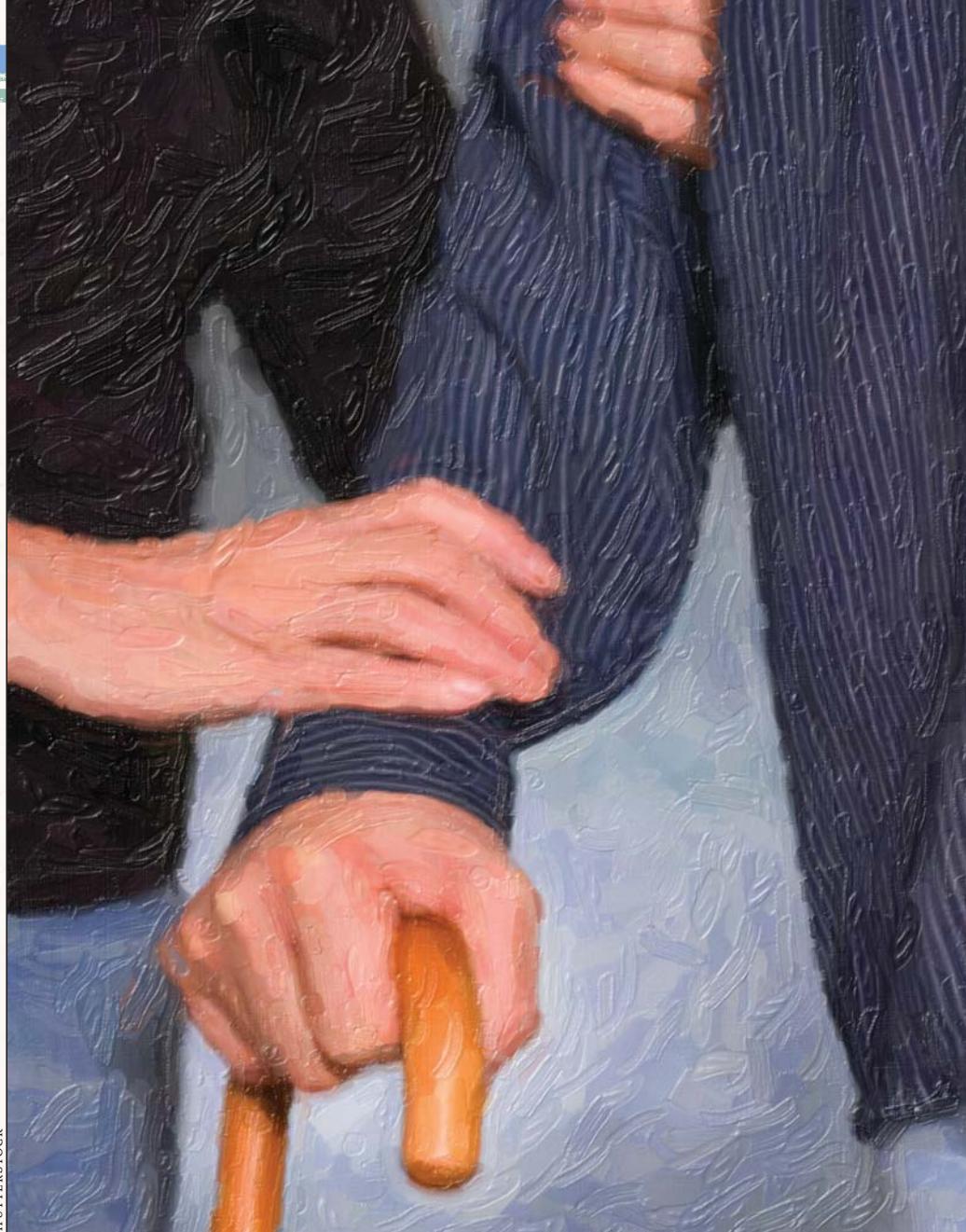
2) Money matters: Parents learned to financially survive and thrive and tend to expect the exact same set of financial priorities and standards from their children and grandchildren when it comes to money, spending and investing.

It can cause a great deal of anxiety for the parent when it seems as though everyone younger is squandering money. Care must be taken to find a comfortable balance between the wisdom of the parent and the needs of the younger family. Most often, adults here in America that are caring for their aging parents keep their own finances completely

separate as long as possible. This allows the parent to feel independent, responsible and useful. Even in the most loving and trusting relationships there can be confusion and hurt feelings about money. Loans should be avoided if at all possible, but if they do become necessary, payments should be made regularly. They should be promptly and cheerfully paid in full with much sincere gratitude toward the lender. The care-giving child should never assume that the parent's money is his or her own to do whatever he or she wants with. Nor do most parents want the added responsibility of managing the money of a grown child. Responsibility for household expenses should be fairly divided or shared according to the family's financial situation.

If the parents have moved to the child's house, rather than to theirs as I have done, Gurudeva advised financially secure children to cover all the expenses of the home and not request rent or any money from the parents. Of course, that is not always possible.

Any negotiating needs to be done with the careful fairness based on dignity and respect. Special consideration should be given to the financial circumstances of both parties. Seldom are the care-giving



SHUTTERSTOCK

child and the parent(s) on exactly equal financial ground. Honest communication, give and take and openness to change as time goes by will ensure that fairness persists. Any family wants to stay away from the bad karma of a "Cinderella" situation. "Poor little mother" or "poor little daughter" are equally unbalanced and unfair. If one party feels entitled to be totally financially taken care of by the other, it will foster despair and resentment. Joyfully decide what bills and needs are to be paid by whom.

3) The single parent: When one parent has passed away, the surviving parent often has expectations and passes along the duties and responsibilities of the deceased partner to the care-giving child.

"The knives need to be sharpened." Or, "The house needs to be painted." Negotiation skills are essential here. Taking on and learning a new skill can be an exhilarating exercise in resourcefulness and ingenuity. It is up to the care-giver to know the difference between what is possible to learn and do and what must be contracted out to others, all according to the household budget and the agreement of all sides. It is OK to realize that some tasks cannot reasonably be

done by you.

Most communities have wonderful senior services available. Take advantage of them. Whether it is attending a free seminar on the latest laws affecting living trusts or free flu shots, these services are well thought out and informative. Some senior centers even offer free exercise programs like yoga and swimming. In some cases, these services are available to both parties.

4) Freedom versus independence: Having an aging parent is like raising a teenager, only in reverse. Responsibilities and duties are only to be taken over when it becomes absolutely necessary. It can be very hard to give up one's independence. Often the tendency of the son or daughter is to do everything for the parent. But what seems to be kindness by the caretaker can be very debilitating and insulting, making the parent feel useless.

Aging parents should be allowed to drive as long as they can safely do so. They should be left to balance their own checkbooks and dole out their own medications as long as they can do so accurately. And yet, the son or daughter should not hesitate to take over any or all responsibilities and duties as it becomes necessary. It is a very delicate dance, and much prayer and sensitivity is needed.

Asking the parent questions like "Do you need my help? Can I help you?" might just be answered with, "No." It is better to ask, "How are you coming along with that? Be sure and let me know if I can help you." Changing a few words in any sentence can set a more harmonious and comfortable tone.

There is another side to freedom. In 2012 my mother fell twice, both times requiring surgery. She has become so frail that I dare not leave her along for more than a few minutes. This means no trips to the bank or the grocery store, not even to the temple. I am a care team of one and this has dramatically changed my life.

5) No longer fit to drive: When the parent is no longer able to safely drive an automobile, the adult care-giving child should cheerfully take the parent wherever he or she needs to go, safely and on time. This becomes the joyful job of the caretaker.

Many aging parents feel that the world is going too fast and that their adult care-giving child should slow down, starting with this car ride! Pointing out the legal speed limit is a good place to start to ease the fears of the parent.

Take a book along to read in the doctor or dentist's office or get a portable computer and answer your e-mail. Enjoy your parents' friends and get books for your own interests at the library.

Parents need to be lovingly encouraged to get out of the house sometimes. If no longer able to drive, they may feel they are a burden and be reluctant to bother you with going anywhere that is "unnecessary." Short, local trips can be planned, and you can invite your parent to accompany you on errands or to visit with your friends, too. Taking mom along to a sewing class or a shopping trip can be fun for both of you.

Negotiating what to do with the extra vehicle, transfer of registration for the Department of Motor Vehicles, insurance and maintenance expenses all need to be worked out. Consideration should be given to which vehicle is the most economical to run, has the least amount of wear and tear and therefore will best benefit the family in the long run. It might mean a daughter gives up a passenger car for a truck or a son gives up a truck for a passenger car.

6) Privacy and lack thereof: Due to the influence of Westernized values, most adult care-giving children of aging parents have lived independently for a number of years while pursuing their careers and raising their children. Moving back in with or inviting a parent to live in your home can cause some interesting privacy issues. Compromise, communication and negotiation are the keys to work-



ing things out to everyone's mutual satisfaction. Simple common courtesies, such as knocking before entering, talking in a soft voice, keeping telephone conversations short, keeping the volume of music and television down, can solve many privacy issues. And, honestly, giving up some privacy is a natural part of any family's living together. Lack of privacy is generally hardest to adjust to when the child has lived alone for a period of time.

7) Your adjustments: Let's face it, living with parent(s) again as an adult is weird! It is like some kind of a warped *deja vu*. Some things are just as we remember them, and other things are completely different. We have spent decades living apart from our parents, all the time evolving into adults by virtue of our own life experiences. Meanwhile, our parents have evolved from healthy, all-knowing and confident adults into frail, unsure and dependent elders. Their children have gray hair. The relentless and inevitable changes of time are evident to all.



Being there: When adult children take care of their aging parents, dharma is fulfilled

8) Agreeing to disagree: There are some basic life issues that adult children and parents may never agree on—hot issues like vegetarianism, religion, politics, the concept of organic gardening, charity, holistic medicine, death and dying, heaven and hell. If argued about, or even discussed, these issues can cause constant disharmony within the home. It is good to identify such issues early on and avoid becoming entangled in the energy of two egos wanting the satisfaction of being right. Keeping our opinions to ourselves and allowing parents the dignity of expressing their own beliefs is how we honor them.

It helps to understand where and how, they, as members of their own generation, and products of their own life experiences, have formed their beliefs. Living with an aging parent is not about trying to change his or her mind about anything. Futility is a good teacher. As a general rule, answer the questions you are asked as simply as possible and wait for another question. It is not a good idea to constantly tell a parent what we think about issues.

In living with others there are always the little things that can drive one another crazy. These are easily and quickly identified! Recognize what they are on your side and see that they never happen again. Make a happy game out of this. For example, Gurudeva always told us to leave a room cleaner than we found it and to work for the sake of the work, not the praise that we expect from it.

9) Accept your parents as they are: Changing another person is simply impossible (it's hard enough to change yourself!). If our aging parents annoy, disappoint or frustrate us, the only way that this can ever be turned around is for us, as adult care-giving children, to absorb our reactions within ourselves. Our aging parents are teaching us how to be aging parents. It is a wonderful life lesson being taught right before our very own eyes. We may learn how to be the perfect non-irritating, aging parent for our own adult children.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is to treat our parents just as we hope to be treated in the future. Adult care-giving children are the living example to their own children and grand chil-

dren. It has been said that we teach people how to treat us. May all of our acts and deeds, punyakarma and sukarma, bring loving reactions to us in the future.

Aging parents enjoy being a vital part of the extended family household. Being in the heart of an active household keeps them from becoming depressed and lonely. Generally, they love to recount stories and give guidelines and advice to just about anyone who will listen. Elders love to hold newborn babies for a minute or two, but it may not be wise to expect them to babysit infants for extended periods, but let being with young children and babies happen on an enjoyment level rather than on a responsibility level. Elders like quiet time and even solitude sometimes. But careful attention should be paid for signs of depression.

10) End-of-life issues: Aging parents live their own lives and will die on their own terms. Expecting them to make decisions according to anyone else's standards and beliefs just sets us up for heartache. It is so important to support them by unconditionally honoring their personal decisions about living and dying. It can be frustrating when they are not willing or able to make even small changes to improve their life or health. Parents have their own karma and astrological timing.

The hospice movement is an organization of devas or angels put on this Earth to assist the family when the time to leave the body behind comes. It is important to recognize the inevitable moment when their help should be sought.

In July, 1995, amid Guru Purnima celebrations at Kauai Aadheenam in Hawaii, Gurudeva was asked the following question, "Many of us are now living with our aging parents, and they live by different standards and life-style choices than we do. Some of them smoke, eat meat and drink, for example. How are we, their Hindu adult care-giving children, to react to this?" Gurudeva smiled and said, "Light their cigarettes and pour their wine!" Everyone smiled.

DAMARA SHANMUGAN is the founder of the Shiva Braille Foundation, which provides Hindu scriptures in Braille for the blind. Email: dshanmug@flash.net



World Congress of Faiths, 1936: (from left to right) Kedar Nath Das Gupta, initiator of the Congress; Sir Francis E. Younghusband, British army officer, explorer, mystic and early advocate for Tibet; and Charles Frederick Weller, Chicago-based American peace activist

HISTORY

Kedar Nath Das Gupta, Dharma's Early Pioneer

An unsung hero of the Hindu renaissance, Kedar Nath Das Gupta raised the status of India and Hinduism in the eyes of the West

BY KUSUM PANT JOSHI, LONDON

ON DECEMBER 7, 1942, THE NEW YORK *Times* reported the death of Kedar Nath Das Gupta (1878–1942), a New Yorker whose cultural and interfaith activities were known on both sides of the Atlantic. An early force in the Hindu renaissance, he was directly linked to Indian leaders such as Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore. Today, in the space of less than 75 years, his name has vanished from public memory.

Beginnings in Bengal and London

Kedar Nath Das Gupta—or KNDG, as he was wont to abbreviate his name—hailed from Chittagong in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). As a youth he was deeply involved in the activism of Indian nationalism. To promote *swaraj* (national or self-rule) and *swadeshi* (indigenous goods made in India), he managed a *swadeshi* store in Calcutta, the Lak-

shmir Bhandar, that also sold goods made by impoverished Bengali widows. Through connections with Rabindranath Tagore, he became Secretary of Industrial Exhibits in Calcutta, where each year he showcased goods made in India. He also ran the powerful Bengali nationalist newspaper *Bharati*. Both enterprises were linked with progressive women from the Tagore family.

Emboldened by his stint as a political and social activist, he sailed to London in 1907 to further the sale of Indian goods and, following Gandhi's example, to study English law. He enrolled as a law student in Lincoln's Inn.

Cultural Ambassador

Before long, KNDG entered London's theatrical world and set up a new organization, the Indian Art and Dramatic Society, which in 1912 he renamed as the Union of East and West. This shift into Britain's cultural arena

might seem puzzling; even today, ethnic arts in the UK struggle to find a place in the mainstream. But it was a wise move. British authorities were cracking down on Indian nationalist activism in the UK, especially after the 1909 murder of a high-ranking British official by an Indian militant. Yet, in the cultural sphere Britain's perception of India was improving.

In early 1909 a band of eminent English writers and artists from diverse fields established the India Society, led by English artist William Rothenstein (a friend and admirer of Tagore) and his friend and copyist Lady Christiana Herringham. Its aim was to correct the negative Western projection and perception of India. As explained in a letter to the *London Times* of June 11, 1910, "The society desires to promote the study and appreciation of Indian culture, architecture and painting, as well as Indian literature and music. There



is a vast unexplored field, the investigation of which will bring about better understanding of Indian ideals and aspirations."

The time was ripe for KNDG to make a move. In a later interview he explained, "First of all I joined my countrymen in the fight for svaraj, or self-rule. We saw we couldn't get rid of British rule until we got rid of our economic slavery. So, in 1902 we strove for svadeshi, or home industry. I even sailed to London to establish a market for our goods. But I was young and inexperienced. The big British capitalists soon killed my little business. I began to give lectures on India and present our classic dramas. Here was a chance for me to help India. So I founded my Indian Art and Drama Society. I laid down the rule that all controversy, whether political or religious, must be avoided."

Sanskrit Plays

KNDG was the top impresario for Indian drama in the UK from 1912 to 1920. His English adaptations of classical Sanskrit plays opened Britain's eyes to India's ancient dramatic treasures and the profundity of its culture. In 1913 William Rothenstein wrote to Tagore in India, "The irrepressible Das Gupta is putting on *Sakuntala* at the Royal Albert Hall!" That play, written by Kalidasa, India's foremost Sanskrit dramatist and poet, ran five times that year. During this eight-year period, KNDG put on 12 major productions, including pieces by Tagore, thus helping move his friend's work into the limelight.

His most ambitious project, one that demonstrated his uncanny ability to build multicultural collaboration, was his 1919 production of *Sakuntala* at London's Winter Garden Theatre. Its cast comprised a galaxy of artists whose names read like a *Who's Who* of the early 1900s. The producer was British actor and theatre director Lewis (later Sir Lewis) Casson. The title role was played by Casson's talented wife, Sybil (later Dame Sybil) Thorndike. The male protagonist, Raja Dushyanta, was played by Arthur (later Sir Arthur) Wontner, who would later immortalize himself by his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in English films of the 1930s. KNDG himself wrote the English adaptation of *Shakuntala*, then had it checked and finalized by Laurence Binyon, an Oxford-educated poet and oriental art expert and scholar.

Even today it would be a prodigious challenge and achievement to bring together and work successfully with such a powerful and diverse team. It is all the more amazing, then, that KNDG accomplished this feat in the early 1900s, in the heart of the proud and mighty British Empire, as an immigrant from a mere colony!



The Maharani of Arakan, 1916: (above) Kedar Nath Das Gupta's stage debut at the London Coliseum, with KNDG and Margaret G. Mitchell at right and Ronald Colman, a future Academy Best Actor winner, at far left; (below) KNDG as Dalia with Margaret Mitchell as Amina in the same play

On to America

KNDG's heart and mind remained fixed on higher goals than theatrical arts. On the last page of his adaptation of *Sakuntala*, he wrote, "The main object of the Union of East and West is to establish a meeting for the East and West in the field of Art, Philosophy, Literature, Music and the Drama." He exhorted Britons to join non-Westerners in peacetime



WALTER BENINGTON

pursuits, just as India had joined England to fight the First World War: "The East has met the West on the field of Battle; will you meet us on the field of art, literature, philosophy, and drama, by joining the Society?"

After eight remarkable years of success in London, KNDG suddenly left the UK. He later recounted, "In 1920, I met Tagore in London. He told me America was wonderful and urged me to go there with him. I scraped up all my money and went."

The America of the "Roaring 20s" was characterized by affluence, rampant consumerism, urban transformation, social ferment and the vigorous questioning of values. This provided an ideal atmosphere for KNDG's creative activities. Wasting no time, he rented New York's Garrick Theatre. By December 1920, within one year of his arrival, the *New York Times* reported that he had staged two Tagore plays at the Garrick: *Sacrifice*, considered Tagore's finest play, and *The Post Office*.

From Stage to Interfaith

In 1924 KNDG met American social worker Charles Frederick Weller, of New Jersey's League of Neighborhood, in 1924. Having witnessed the ravages of the World War I, both men were determined to build con-



BILL CONVEX, PICASA, YOGANANDA MIDDLE YEARS

Collaborating with sages:
Paramahansa Yogananda (left) in London with Kedar Nath Das Gupta during the 1936 World Congress of Faiths

economic conditions, ignorance, intolerance, hatred, fear; helping men and women to develop their own character by broader and inner culture."

The WCF was a huge success. Over 80 meetings were attended by 44,000 people; and a National Committee of 300 members was established. Bishop McConnell, one of the top officers, claimed that the 1933 event was "an advance" on the 1893 Parliament. The first difference is that instead of a comparative parade of rival religions, all faiths are challenged to manifest or apply their religion by helping to solve the urgent problems which impede man's progress. The second difference is that the word *faiths* is understood to include, not only all religions, but all types of spiritual consciousness or convictions which are determining the actual lives of significant groups of people. Educational, philanthropic, social, economic, national and political 'faiths' are thus included."

The London WCF, 1936

A second WCF was held in 1936 at University College, London. Organized by Colonel Francis Younghusband, who had attended the 1933 WCF and was encouraged by KNDG. It drew eminent religious scholars from all over the world, including Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Professor Mahendranath Sircar and Professor S. N. Das Gupta on Hinduism, Sir Abdul Qadir and Salim Yusuf Ali on Islam, Professor Malasekara from Sri Lanka on Buddhism, Professor Nicolas Berdiaeff on Christianity and Dr. Suzuki on Zen Buddhism. The London Congress saw limited success, as few actual religious leaders chose to attend. Undaunted, however, the organizers held several more conferences—at Oxford (1937), Cambridge (1938) and Paris (1939).

Trail-Blazer to Emulate

The interfaith initiative sparked by Kedar Nath Das Gupta has yet to gather force and blaze forth in its potential glory as a powerful international movement, but the story of KNDG's remarkable life and achievements must be resuscitated. This indefatigable soul, on fire with the Hindu ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the universe is one big family), provided an example that has the power to inspire generations to come.

Kusum Pant Joshi, 60, is a social historian, writer and editor. She is chief researcher for the South Asian Cinema Foundation, London.



Champions of Nonviolence

How men and women committed to Gandhian tactics changed our world for the better

BY MARK HAWTHORNE, CALIFORNIA

HERE ARE IN THE WORLD MANY PEOPLE who have fought great battles for social or political justice using the principles of Mahatma Gandhi. Five among them stand out strongly: Martin Luther King, leader of the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s; Nelson Mandela, who brought an end to apartheid in South Africa; the Dalai Lama, who seeks a peaceful resolution on Tibet; Aung San Suu Kyi, who fought for democracy in her native Myanmar (Burma); and César Chávez, who struggled to reduce exploitation of farm workers in California. Four of these—King, Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Suu Kyi—were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. All proudly acknowledged their debt to Gandhi.

To be equated with Mahatma Gandhi is to be instantly aligned with a distinct set of ideals, for the name resonates for anyone who believes in truth, independence and nonviolence. Although *ahimsa* literally means "noninjury," Gandhi's use of the word encompassed universal love. According to the Mahatma, to follow the doctrine of *ahimsa* means you may not offend anyone; you may not harbor an uncharitable thought, even of your enemy. Indeed, the man who follows *ahimsa* has no enemies. "A man cannot then practice *ahimsa* and be a coward at the same time," he wrote. "The practice of *ahimsa* calls forth the greatest courage."

Gandhi died at the hand of an assassin in 1948, the year after India gained its independence from Britain, largely due to his efforts. His achievements had become known around the globe, encouraging world leaders that, yes, nonviolence could indeed be effective in creating change, if you had the courage and fortitude to follow such a path.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

One leader to heed that call was Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. This young Black minister rose to prominence in America dur-

ing the civil rights movement in the 1950s, when racial tensions had escalated and demonstrations swelled for voting rights and school integration. America was segregated, with African Americans and other groups of color subjected to political and economic disenfranchisement. Violence against them was commonplace, especially in the South.

In the 1940s, King was a seminary student who despaired that love could ever be an effective tool for social reform. Then Gandhi's writings changed his thinking. He learned how Gandhi had used *ahimsa* to help India gain independence from its British oppressors. Why, King thought, couldn't this same policy work for the African American in his struggle to abolish segregation and be treated as an equal among whites?

King was able to put his newfound philosophy to the test in 1955 when he was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association and began leading the city's bus boycott against segregated buses where the Blacks had to sit in the back. As the nonviolent protest took root, and bus ridership in the city dropped 90 percent, King's home was bombed and he suffered many of the same abuses Gandhi had. King rallied the protesters with the words of Mahatma Gandhi: "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood." The eleven-month struggle led all the way to the US Supreme Court, which declared segregation on buses unconstitutional.

King's victory brought him international recognition, and he was called "the American Gandhi." Now filled with hope, the reverend made a pilgrimage to India in 1959 to speak with those who knew and worked with Gandhi. King, his wife Coretta and educator Lawrence Reddick landed in Bombay on February 9, arriving in New Delhi the following day. He told reporters at the airport: "To other countries I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim."

At a state dinner with India's Prime Minis-



HULTON GETTY PHOTO ARCHIVE

ter Jawaharlal Nehru, King was full of questions about Gandhi's philosophy and adherence to *ahimsa*. Nehru's answers focused on Gandhi's political acumen, leaving King to seek out Gandhi's spiritual successor, Vinoba Bhave, an ardent Gandhi follower who carried on the Mahatma's efforts for a just and equitable society. Born into a devout brahmin family, Vinoba appreciated the spiritual dimension of Gandhi's vision. He understood that Gandhi aimed at more than independence from Britain—he envisioned a wider goal: Sarvodaya, a nonviolent society dedicated to "the welfare of all." In 1940, Gandhi selected Vinoba to initiate a great campaign of civil disobedience in his struggle against the British. He was arrested and spent five years in prison. When King caught up with him in 1959, Vinoba was engaged in a campaign he called the Bhoodan ("gift of land") movement, traversing India on foot, asking rich landowners to donate one-fifth of their land to the poor. By 1954 the donations had grown to 25 million acres, far exceeding any land reform achieved by the government.

During his time in India, King felt very much at home. Their overlapping experiences with racism and common philosophy of liberation sparked numerous conversations between King and the Indians he met. He spoke before university groups and at

public gatherings, which were always well attended. "We were looked upon as brothers, with the color of our skins as something of an asset," he later said. "But the strongest bond of fraternity was the common cause of minority and colonial peoples in America, Africa and Asia struggling to throw off racism and imperialism."

Indian papers had carried news of the Montgomery bus boycott, and Gandhians praised King for his adherence to *ahimsa*. To them, as to King, it suggested that nonviolent resistance could effectively work even under a totalitarian regime, such as in South Africa. King and a group of Gandhians even found themselves arguing this point with a group of African students who were studying in India. The students believed that nonviolent resistance could only work if the opponent had a conscience. King, along with others, explained the differences between passive resistance and nonresistance. "True nonviolent resistance is not unrealistic submission to evil power," King said. "It is rather a courageous confrontation of evil by the power of love, in the faith that it is better to be the recipient of violence than the inflicter of it, since the latter only multiplies the existence of violence and bitterness in the universe, while the former may develop a sense of shame in the opponent, and thereby bring

about a transformation and change of heart."

It had taken India almost half a century to gain independence, and therefore it was unrealistic to expect immediate gains in the US. King returned to America with an appreciation for Gandhi's patience and a greater determination to achieve freedom for African Americans through nonviolent means.

From the pulpit in Atlanta, King cited Gandhi's denouncing the practice of untouchability to illustrate it is better to criticize ourselves than our enemies. Martin Luther King, Jr. received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 and continued his nonviolent struggle until 1968 when, at 39 years old, like Gandhi, he was shot dead by an assassin.

Dalai Lama

The same year King went to India, 1959, a Tibetan uprising was brutally suppressed by the Chinese, and Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, fled to India. The Dalai Lama had been to India three years earlier to celebrate the Buddha's 2500th birthday. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., he had sought out Gandhians to learn how India had achieved independence through nonviolence. Concerned about the survival of Tibetans and the country's unique heritage, the Dalai Lama has not called for the outright independence of Tibet or its separation from China. His "Middle

Way Approach" seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet, eliminating direct rule from Beijing and giving it the right to maintain its culture, language and religions while remaining part of China.

The Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach and lifelong dedication to nonviolence were recognized with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. In his speech to the Nobel committee, the Dalai Lama said, "I accept the prize as a tribute to the man who founded the modern tradition of nonviolent action for change—Mahatma Gandhi—whose life taught and inspired me."

Nelson Mandela

The Dalai Lama acknowledges Gandhi as his mentor but calls fellow Nobel Laureate Nelson Mandela of South Africa the Mahatma's successor as a savior of humanity through his struggle for peaceful change. "The [21st century] should be one of dialogue and peace," he said after meeting Mandela. "In the past Mahatma Gandhi was a very good example of this and now you [Nelson Mandela] are a great successor of that person."

Nelson Mandela, then a young and successful lawyer, became active in the anti-apartheid movement in the 1940s. He warned demonstrators of the difficulties they would face and urged them to refrain from violence. When Mandela and another lawyer opened their own practice in 1952, the first black legal firm in the country, they were inundated with African clients, many of them victims of the apartheid system. Mandela used the courts to good advantage, challenging white authority and building his reputation in the fight against discrimination.

As the 1960s approached and South African authorities used more and more violence to crack down on the anti-apartheid movement, Mandela shifted his approach from civil disobedience to sabotage. "I followed the Gandhian strategy for as long as I could," he later wrote, "but then there came a point in our struggle when the brute force of the oppressor could no longer be countered through passive resistance alone. Even then, we chose sabotage because it did not involve the loss of life, and it offered the best hope for future race relations."

Mandela was arrested in 1962 and later sentenced to life imprisonment for sabotage, making him an international symbol of struggle against apartheid. After 27 years, he was released from prison in 1990, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 and became the first president of post-apartheid South Africa the following year.

Aung San Suu Kyi

About the time that South African politicians were transforming racial discrimina-



tion into apartheid, Burma, part of British India for a century, was granted independence. But the transition proved violent, and in a short time Burma (now Myanmar) was ruled by a military junta.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a graceful and slight woman of 68, has become the symbol of nonviolent protest in Myanmar. Struggling against a tide of brutal suppression of pro-democracy campaigns, she has remained true to the ideals of Gandhi who, she said, "demonstrated to the world the supremacy of moral force over force based on the might of arms or empire."

Born in Burma, Suu Kyi is the child of assassinated Myanmar independence hero General Aung San, who led the struggle for the country's independence. Suu Kyi spent much of her youth in New Delhi, where her mother was serving as Burma's Ambassador to India. It was there that Suu Kyi learned about Mahatma Gandhi. In 1964 she enrolled in Oxford University, where she studied philosophy, politics and economics.

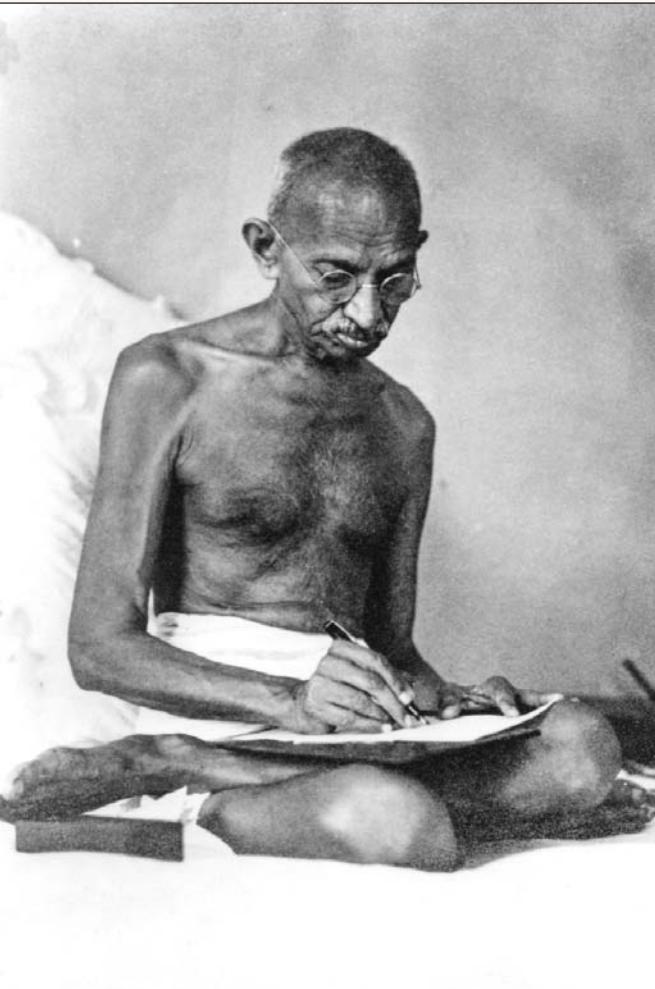
When she returned to Burma in 1988, she spoke out against the military rule. As the daughter of a national hero and an ambassador, she was not someone the junta could simply lock away in prison. She was put under house arrest until 1995.

Aung San Suu Kyi has built a platform on four themes: 1) The restoration of human rights, 2) Nonviolent means to achieve these rights, 3) The problem of human rights has arisen because the military usurped power from the government, and 4) All opponents of the military dictatorship must not actively provoke the military to do anything except lay down its arms.

The military still ruled with an iron fist until a constitutional referendum was held in 2008, resulting in elections in 2010 and dissolution of the junta the following year. Today, Suu Kyi holds office in the Burmese lower house and leads the National League for Democracy, which she helped found.

César Chávez

The most unlikely of our Gandhians is César Chávez. At age 21, he watched the newsreels announcing that Gandhi had defeated the British Empire without the use of force. He wondered how Gandhi could have accomplished such a feat. Born in Arizona in 1927



NEWS.COM/AKG/GANDHI PHOTO SERVICE

Leadership: Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in his home town of Porbandar, Gujarat, in August of 1942

couragement for his own struggle against the exploitation of Mexican, Mexican-American, Filipino and African-American migrant agricultural workers, who comprised the majority of farm laborers in the United States. Performing backbreaking work in harsh conditions, these workers were sometimes thought of—and treated—as slaves by growers.

With Gandhi as his guide, Chávez began a workers' rights movement that used marches, boycotts, strikes and civil disobedience to bring attention to farm-work conditions.

to a family of migrant farm workers, Chávez saw firsthand how Mexican Americans were segregated and treated differently from whites. Chávez read Gandhi's autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Chávez went on to read everything he could find about Gandhi, whose belief in self-sacrifice and self-discipline were values Chávez could understand. He was especially impressed by Gandhi's commitment to ahimsa. Chávez found in Gandhi's life hope and en-

ergy to strike against grape growers in California: "If someone commits violence against us, it is much better—if we can—not to react against the violence but to react in such a way as to get closer to our goal. People don't like to see a nonviolent movement subjected to violence, and there's a lot of support across the country for nonviolence. That's the key point we have going for us. We can change the world if we can do it nonviolently."

In 1962, Chávez established the National Farm Workers Association, which later became the United Farm Workers (UFW). Chávez traveled from camp to camp organizing the workers. He felt the growers' use of pesticides was one of his strongest and most critical platforms, and one that would also concern the consumer. The union began a boycott of table grapes in 1965, picketing farms and disseminating information about pesticide use. The growers hired illegal workers and brought in strikebreakers to beat up the strikers. Union members, Chávez included, were jailed repeatedly.

Again taking a cue from Gandhi, Chávez went on fasts to gain attention for the cause, going without food for 25 days in 1968 when he saw the grape boycott losing ground. He would fast for 36 days in 1988. Sympathetic to Chávez and the union's cause, religious leaders, public officials and others from across America traveled to California to march in support of the farm workers. After five years of protests, some grape growers signed agreements with the union, and they lifted the grape boycott.

By the early 1980s, the tens of thousands of farm laborers working under UFW contracts enjoyed higher pay, family health coverage, pension benefits and other contract protections. Chávez

died in his sleep in April, 1993. Having never earned more than \$6,000 a year and never owning a house, Chávez could only leave behind his legacy of nonviolence and commitment to human rights. As he put it: "Once people understand the strength of nonviolence—the force it generates, the love it creates, the response it brings from the total community—they will not easily abandon it."

Gandhi's example transcended color and politics. Dedicated to human rights and not willing to debase themselves through violence, leaders like King, the Dalai Lama,

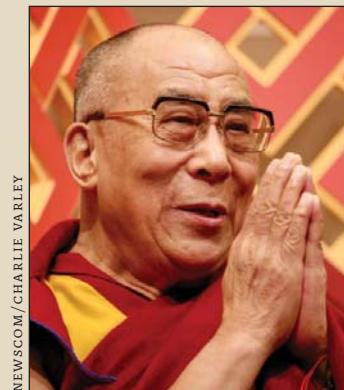
Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi and César Chávez saw that ahimsa is more powerful than armed protests. In a tribute to his mentor in a 1998 edition of *Asiaweek*, the Dalai Lama eloquently characterized Gandhi's gift to the world. "If we are to think of the 20th century as one of Asian liberation," he

wrote, "Mahatma Gandhi naturally stands out as a beacon of inspiration. Drawing on the thoughts of India's great teachers of the past, he employed the ancient but powerful idea of ahimsa, or nonviolence, in a fresh, dynamic and effective way. A great man with a deep understanding of human nature, Ma-

hatma Gandhi made every effort to encourage the full development of the positive aspects of our human potential and to reduce or restrain the negative. Consequently, he showed by example that personal liberation is integral to the successful achievement of national liberation."

Gandhians on Gandhi

Five leaders who prevailed with the spirit of nonviolence



NEWS.COM/CHARLIE VARLEY

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet: "The place of Gandhi's cremation was a calm and beautiful spot. I felt very grateful to be there, the guest of a people who, like me, had endured foreign domination, grateful also to be in the country that had adopted ahimsa, the Mahatma's doctrine of nonviolence. As I stood praying, I experienced simultaneously great sadness at not being able to meet Gandhi in person and great joy at the

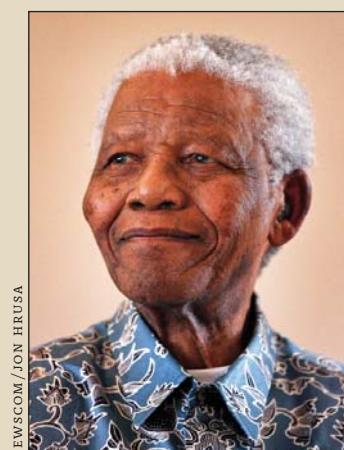
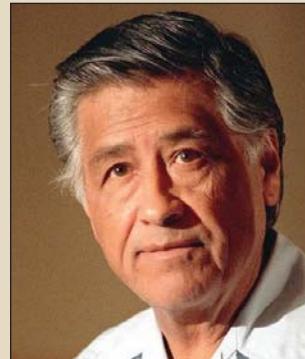
on the consent and goodwill of the people."



NEWS.COM/STR/EYE EXPRESS

on compulsion and discipline. In the April 17, 1930, issue of *Young India* he wrote: 'We may not use compulsion even in the matter of doing a good thing. Any compulsion will ruin the cause.' Gandhiji further wrote in the December 20, 1931, issue of the same publication, 'We cannot learn discipline by compulsion.' These simple statements reach to the very heart of our attempts to build a strong and united Burma based

on the consent and goodwill of the people."



NEWS.COM/JON HHRUSA

Nelson Mandela, first president of post-apartheid South Africa: "Gandhi remains today the only complete critique of advanced industrial society. Others have criticized its totalitarianism, but not its productive apparatus. He is not against science and technology, but he places priority on the right to work and opposes mechanization to the extent that it usurps this right. Large-scale machinery, he holds, concentrates wealth in the hands of one man who tyrannizes the rest. He favors

the small machine; he seeks to keep the individual in control of his

tools, to maintain an interdependent love relation between the two, as a cricketer with his bat or Krishna with his flute. Above all, he seeks to liberate the individual from his alienation to the machine and restore morality to the productive process."



Martin Luther King Jr., minister and civil rights activist: "Gandhi was inevitable. If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."



OPINION

How Can Hindus Unite?

The common language of Hinduism must depart from the dominance of Shankaran Advaita

BY SRINIVAS SUDHINDRA

AMIDST THE GLOBALIZATION OF DIVERSE PHILOSOPHIES, Hindus are trying to establish a unique place for themselves. This requires a unique terminology that explains Hinduism, not in a Western framework but on its own terms. Some of our leaders are attempting such a representation of Hinduism, but the ground beneath them is shaky. Their efforts invite ridicule, as they have chosen a terminology which discounts or entirely disregards major streams of Hindu thought. Thus, individual streams of Hinduism are ignoring or just talking at each other. For unity to succeed, leaders must use a terminology that is inclusive and respectful of the diverse branches that make up the tree of Hinduism.

In current definitions of Hinduism, the dominant terminology is that of Advaita, as defined by Shankara's Mayavada: "*brahma satyam, jagat mithya, jivo brahmaiva na parah*" (loosely translated as "God alone is real, the world is illusory, the individual is none other than God"). This has become part of the defacto popular definition of the Hindu worldview. Wikipedia says, "It is the Smarta view that dominates the view of Hinduism in the West as Smarta belief includes Advaita belief and the first Hindu saint who significantly brought Hinduism to the West was Swami Vivekananda, an adherent of Advaita."

Swami Vivekananda was one of the earliest to try to project Hinduism as a unified and consistent philosophy. At the Ethical Society, Brooklyn, New York, 1894, he said, "We believe in a God, the Father of the universe, infinite and omnipotent. But if our soul at last becomes perfect, it also must become infinite. But there is no room for two infinite unconditional beings, and hence we believe in a Personal God, and we ourselves are He."

Swami Vivekananda was selling Advaita not as Advaita but as Hinduism. He mostly ignores the other diverse Hindu streams, such as the Vaishnavite, Saivite and Shakta sampradayas. In truth, many Hindu traditions are vehemently opposed to Shankara's concepts of Mayavada and identity of the individual with Brahman. Each stream of Hinduism has its own unique, rich traditions (some much older than Shankara) and a right to stand on its own. Advocate Shankara's Advaita all you want, but do not reduce the term "Hinduism" to mean just his form of Advaita. Shankara's Advaita alone does not hold the copyright over the term Hinduism.

However, in influential circles, it is the Advaitins who hold most positions of power. Consider the recent "Hindu Good News" initiative (hinduismgoodnews.com), which claims to speak on behalf of all Hindus. "And we, every one of us, are endowed with the same potential as Jesus, to uncover this divinity within ourselves in the here and now—without the need for someone else's past sacrifice." This again endorses the "*jivo brahmaiva na parah*" view of Advaita in a subtle and indirect way. The words "same potential" here is not agreeable to other Hindu traditions. It ignores the Vedic hierarchy of beings, the distinction between and among devatas, rishis and manavas, etc. The



intent which got lost in translation is that the nature of one's Atman is the same as everyone else's, i.e., Sat, Chit and Ananda. But while Hindus agree on the nature of Self, traditions differ on whether or not every individual has the same potential for moksha.

When the non-Advaita traditions enter into a conversation about Hinduism, they are forced to do one of the following: i) ignore their own beliefs, i.e., multiplicity of Atman or the reality of the material world; ii) engage in incoherent conversations where the speaker and audience have different understanding of the terminology used; iii) declare that they do not belong to Hinduism! Their attempt to communicate their beliefs is doomed to failure. They are marginalized and forgotten in the mainstream debate comparing Hinduism with other religions.

Individually, many of the Hindu traditions lack the means and expertise to stand up on their own against the might of the West. Hence, there is a need for a collective front to engage with the West. However, we do not have to whitewash our differences to put up a unified face in front of other religions. So, it is important

to develop a terminology that respects and represents the diverse philosophical streams that make up Hinduism.

To develop such a terminology, scholar and writer Rajiv Malhotra suggests that we avoid terms that have differences within a homogenous group (in this case, Hinduism) and select terms that point to differences between heterogeneous groups (i.e., Western religions). Based on such criteria, the terminology for Hinduism might better include/exclude the following.

Not Maya but Ajnana: Avoid using terms like *maya* but talk about *ajnana* (ignorance) being the condition of Atman/Jiva in this world. This concept is mostly interpreted the same by all Hindus and also differs from the Abrahamic concept of humans as sinners.

Not Unity but Sat-Chit-Ananda: Avoid phrases like "Unity of Brahman with Atman" to explain Moksha, a concept with varying interpretations. Instead, talk about the nature of a liberated Atman as Sat, Chit and Ananda, something we all agree on.

Not Advaita but Antaryamin: Avoid using concepts like "Single/Multiple Atman" (a contentious subject among Hindus). Instead, speak of the Antaryamin nature of God, as the omnipresent Divine Indweller of every being, to contrast our faith with Abrahamic religions where God is in Heaven and not within the Soul, i.e., not omnipresent.

Not Mithya but Yuga Chakra: Avoid phrases like "The world is mithya/illusion," which is specific to Shankara's philosophy. Talk instead about our common, accepted view of the cyclic nature of the world, creation, maintenance, destruction, in contrast to the Abrahamic concept of linear time with emphasis on just the creation aspect.

Such a change in approach can serve two purposes: It can unite Hindus and at the same time provide a platform to critique the West. Developing an inclusive language for Hinduism is a must, before entering into a dialogue with the West. The language of Hinduism must reflect the ethos on which it is built, i.e., unity in diversity.

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JOIN HAF ON SEPT 14: HINDU AMERICAN ADVOCACY AWARENESS GALA DINNER

RECOGNIZING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS,
INFLUENCE, AND POTENTIAL

Come celebrate HAF's
10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
with its staff, volunteers,
supporters, and keynote speaker:



DATE
**Saturday,
September 14, 2013**

TIME
5:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION
**India Community Center
525 Los Coches St
Milpitas, CA 95035**

RSVP
<http://haf2013.eventbrite.com>

Babysitting: A separate room with entertainment and activities for children (ages 5+) will be available.

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10
CELEBRATING
TEN YEARS



Hindu Heritage Endowment

HINDU ADVOCACY GROUP CELEBRATES A DECADE OF SERVICE

In 2003 in the United States the idea of Hindu advocacy was virtually unknown. But now, ten years later, this is not the case. Thanks to the efforts of the Hindu American Foundation (HAF), the concept of and need for Hindu advocacy no longer requires a lengthy introduction. Rather, the focus is on what situations are happening today affecting Hindus that most need our advocacy efforts.

June, 2013 marked their "Tenth Annual DC Advocacy Days" in which over fifty delegates representing HAF met personally with individual members of Congress. Delegates asked legislative leaders



The HAF team with Hinduism Today publisher Satguru Bodhinatha and managing editor Acharya Arumuganathaswami at the Tenth Annual DC Advocacy Days event

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The HAF team with Hinduism Today publisher Satguru Bodhinatha and managing editor Acharya Arumuganathaswami at the Tenth Annual DC Advocacy Days event

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1971 genocide during Pakistan's partition. Delegates covered domestic issues, sharing Hindu perspectives on the pending immigration legislation. Each office was provided a copy of HAF's annual Human Rights Report which details human rights violations against Hindus in ten countries.

HAF deserves a high score for consistency. Suhag Shukla, Esq., HAF's Executive Director and Legal Counsel, said that "our government leaders are hearing from Hindu Americans in a sustained, consistent way for the last decade, and the results are showing. Our commitment to the community is to continue these efforts, expand them, and usher in a new generation of Hindu-American leaders who will make a difference in political engagement."

HAF's advocacy efforts also focus on issues that affect only a few. "When the parents of two young Hindu American boys contacted Houston, Texas community leaders for help in getting answers from school authorities about the incessant bullying their children were facing at their Humble district school, the HAF and the Hindu community rallied quickly to support the family and help find solutions to prevent recurrences.

The Hindu American Foundation has two endowments with Hindu Heritage Endowment. Hindu American Foundation Endowment (fund #75) provides general support to HAF's work of advocating for the Hindu American community. This work includes interacting with and educating leaders in public policy, academia, media and the public at large about Hinduism and global issues concerning Hindus, such as religious liberty, the portrayal of Hinduism, hate speech, hate crimes and human rights. And the Endowment for Global Hindu Rights (fund #76) supports HAF's efforts to highlight and correct human rights violations faced by Hindus world-wide—issues that are largely overlooked by most well-known human rights agencies. Hindus everywhere are enjoined to support HAF in this crucial work.

Learn more about these two funds and the eighty-two individual funds under the umbrella of Hindu Heritage Endowment at www.hheonline.org.

APRIL TO JUNE ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

Kauai Aadheenam Monastic Endowment	Gowri Nadason	173.20	Michael Zimmermann	6.00	Soma Sundaram	15.00	
Roshan Harilela	375.00	Toshadevi Nataraj	100.00	Total	57.00	Total	2,318.17
Keith Wallach	50.00	Aran Sambandar	162.00	A. Saravanapanav Family Murugan Temple Pillaiyar Shrine Fund			
Anonymous	650.36	Barathy Sockanathan	48.91	Pathmini Saravanapanav	150.00	Siva Poomi School Trust	
Other Donations	85,000.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00			Michael R. Eisen	25.00
Total	85,975.36	Matthew Wieczork	20.00				
		Anonymous	500.36	Yogaswami Hindu Boys' Home Fund			
		Other Donations	4,800.00	Hotranatha Ajaya	33.00	Anonymous	790.72
		Total	6,382.82	Amarnath & Latha Devarmanai	324.00	Maruthu Pandian Darmalingam	60.00
Iraivan Temple Endowment	Anonymous	95.00	Yamini Jairaman	51.00	Sasikumar Darmalingam	20.00	
Dheeraj & Geeta Kumari Handa	202.00	Alfiya Khasanova	100.00	Total	870.72		
Latifa Kannan	102.00	Mooneengan Koorthan	32.26				
Ravi Nana	108.00	Gaurav Malhotra	251.00	India Hindu Tribals Endowment			
Murari Singh	100.00	Lisa Marston	108.00	Rajendra Giri	110.00		
Other Donations	84,894.66	Toshadevi Nataraj	100.00	Murugan Temple of North America Puja Fund			
Pooled Income Fund	263.92	Mano Navaratnarajah	150.00	Vayudeva Varadan	54.00		
Total	85,765.58	Srinivasan Parthasarathy	10.00				
		Champak & Hansaben Patel	101.00	Ramanathaswamy Temple Cleaning Fund			
Kauai Aadheenam Annual Archana Fund	David Bohn	7.00	Mrunal Patel	4,008.00	Microsoft Matching Gifts Program	100.00	
Microsoft Matching Gifts Program	100.00	Anonymous	468.75	Danye Crotti	150.00		
Anonymous	192.00	Alex Roberto	45.00	Hiranya Gowda	99.00		
Hemakshesha Naatha Batumallah	7.00	Aran Sambandar	162.00	Kishore Krishna	100.00		
Mekaladeva Batumallah	7.00	Thanaletchi Umamaheswaran	100.00	Manogaran Mardemootoo	64.52		
Gunavadee Caremben	9.68	Ananya Dayanandan Valayen	12.57	Kulagan Moonesawmy	19.35		
Somasundaram Caremben	9.68	Vayudeva Varadan	63.00	Toshadevi Nataraj	60.00		
Sukanta Caremben	9.68	Michael Wasylkiw	648.00	Ganga Sivanathan	300.00		
Nalini Chenganna	225.80	Total	6,767.58	Anonymous	36.12		
Tarakini Gunasegaran	45.40		Total	928.99			
Juhivaasana Koorthan	6.45	Saiverte Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired		Cows of Kadavul and Iraivan Temples (Kovil Maadu) Endowment			
Kishore Krishna	100.00	T. P. Rajalakshmi	1,017.08	Anonymous	190.24		
Amil Kumar	18.00	Sreedharan Nair	400.00	Dheeraj & Geeta Kumari Handa	51.00		
Praveen Kumar	251.00	Total	2,417.08	Natraj Narayanswami	33.00		
Hara Santosa Kumaran	251.00	Udayan Care Endowment Fund		Toshadevi Nataraj	30.00		
Punitavathi Kuppusamy	20.00	Rajendra Giri	110.00	Shamalah Nataraja	200.00		
Poongodi Mogan	251.00	Anonymous	216.72	Michael Zimmermann	6.00		
Bhaveshan Moorogen	6.46	Total	326.72	Total	510.24		
Shanda Kumaran Moorogen	6.46	Saiverte Hindu Scriptural Fund for the Visually Impaired		Jaffna Kannathidu Kali Kovil Endowment			
Udayadeva Moorogen	6.46	T. P. Rajalakshmi	1,017.08	Anonymous	90.30		
Jogendra Moorogen	4.83	Sreedharan Nair	400.00	Pakistan Hindu Empowerment Fund			
Vidyadevi Moorogen	4.83	Total	2,417.08	Ishani Chowdhury	51.00		
Toshadevi Nataraj	80.00	Malaysia Hindu Renaissance Fund		Sanjay Dahya	10.23		
Bijamati Pareatumbbee	46.66	Michael R. Eisen	25.00	Anil Kumar	18.00		
Subramaniam Pennathur	49.98	Hinduism Today Production Fund		Total	79.23		
Chinmayee Rajasankara	25.50	Raj Kumar Bhardwaj	100.00	Pancharangam Endowment Fund			
Hemavalli Sivalingam	3.87	Ron & Jennifer Burke	100.00	Anonymous	64.99		
Komaladeva Sivananda	66.46	P.C. Ghosh	90.00	Srinath Chakravarty	1.00		
Lavanyadeva Sivananda	6.27	Hiranya Gowda	93.00	Sanjay Dahya	10.34		
Shivaani Sivananda	25.39	Jothi Kotta	5,000.00	Rahul Deep	25.00		
Sarasvathi Visualingam	65.00	Devdatta & Swati Mhaiskar	30.00	Pradeepshunder Ganesh	25.00		
Pooled Income Fund	884.73	Hemalatha Nathan	5,000.00	Mukesh & Seema Garg	25.00		
Total	2,786.59	Subramaniam Pennathur	50.01	Ram Gopalaswamy	25.00		
		Sakuntala Periasamy	60.73	Bhagirath Gopinath	101.00		
Hinduism Today Lifetime Subscription Fund	Anonymous	Anonymous	41.99	Patricia Ann Hickey	25.00		
Jag & Neelam Aggarwal	499.00	Muni Laxmi & Jai Ram Reddy	25.00	Radha & Ganesh Krishnan	25.00		
Bimal Amin	499.00	Aran Sambandar	162.00	Priya Krishnan & Parameshwaran Gopi	25.00		
Suma Bhandari	499.00	Urmil Shukla	5,000.00	Paramesha Pillay	50.00		
Lakshmi Bushan	499.00	Ganga Sivanathan	516.00	Rajeswari Raghurama	5.00		
K.S. Chandrasekaran	499.00	Total	16,268.73	Munnirpallam Sankar	25.00		
Kumara Hunter	400.00	Hindu Orphanage Endowment Fund		Keshava Shukla	25.00		
Amit Khare	490.00	Rajendra Giri	110.00	Pranavan Simmeyanandan	25.00		
Bala Krishna	59.35	Shashikali Muniandy	375.00	Adi Srikantha	25.00		
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Poongodi Mogan	156.52	Anonymous	216.72	Aran Veylan	25.00		
Sivakaviniyan Moonesawmy	120.00	Pooled Income Fund	263.92	Krishna K. Yeleswarapu	25.00		
Dharma Rajah & Navarani Nadarajah	499.00	Total	1,061.72	Pooled Income Fund	36,930.59		
Kirtideva Peruman	29.04	Manjung Hindu Sabha Orphanage Fund		Total	37,612.92		
Niroshne Peruman	33.87	Subashini Muniandy	30.00	Digital Dharma Endowment			
Iduman Rajan	499.00	Anonymous	316.72	Shyamadeva Dandapani	51.00		
Shruthi Rajashekara	499.00	Total	346.72	Anonymous	5,598.67		
Sankar Sastri	499.00	Pazhassi Balamandiram Orphanage Fund		Total	5,649.67		
Anonymous	499.00	Praneel Chandra Gosai	30.00	Hindu of the Year Fund			
Chetnanand Sharma	499.00	Thayallan Thangaratnam	200.00	Pooled Income Fund	5,700.21		
Shriharsha Sharma	499.00	Anonymous	246.72	Nadesan Family Lord Muruga Shum Fund			
Logavalli Sinsamy	38.70	Total	476.72	Pooled Income Fund	8,368.65		
Nutanaya Sivaceyon	104.00	Hindu Education Endowment		Insurance Premiums			
Potriyan Sivanathan	6.52	Hiranya Gowda	500.00	Mrunal Patel	3,003.00		
Total	9,224.00	Murali Balaji	251.00	Kauai Aadheenam Renovation Endowment			
		Hasu N. & Hansa H. Patel	100.00	Other Donations	600.00		
Gurudeva's Trilogy Distribution Fund	Natraj Narayanswami	Total	351.00	Total Contributions	\$243,328.63		
Vel Mahalingum	12.90	Himalayan Academy Book Distribution Fund		Funds at Market Value, Jun 30, 2013			
Manogaran Mardemootoo	32.26	Shyamadeva Dandapani	55.00	Total Endowment Funds	\$11,509,711.44		
Total	45.16	Pooled Income Fund	54,770.50				
		Total	54,825.50				
Kadavul Nataraja Ardra Abhishekam Endowment	Gowri Nadason	Saiva Agamas Trust					
Aravindraj Chandrasekaran	9.00	Ganga Sivanathan	210.00				
Parimala Selvaraj	115.75	Pooled Income Fund	263.92				
Bala Sivaceyon	31.00	Total	473.92				
Total	665.75	Spiritual Park of Mauritius Endowment					
		Anil Kumar	18.00				
Kauai Aadheenam Matavasi Medical Fund	Shyamadeva Dandapani	Shanthi Srinivas	101.00				
Kulagan Moonesawmy	55.00	Total	119.00				
Carmen Debora Murbach	19.35	Yogaswami Hindu Girls' Home of Sittandy Endowment					
Rajadeva Alahan	450.00	Anonymous	648.16				
		Jeri Arin	300.00				
		Sunil Ch					

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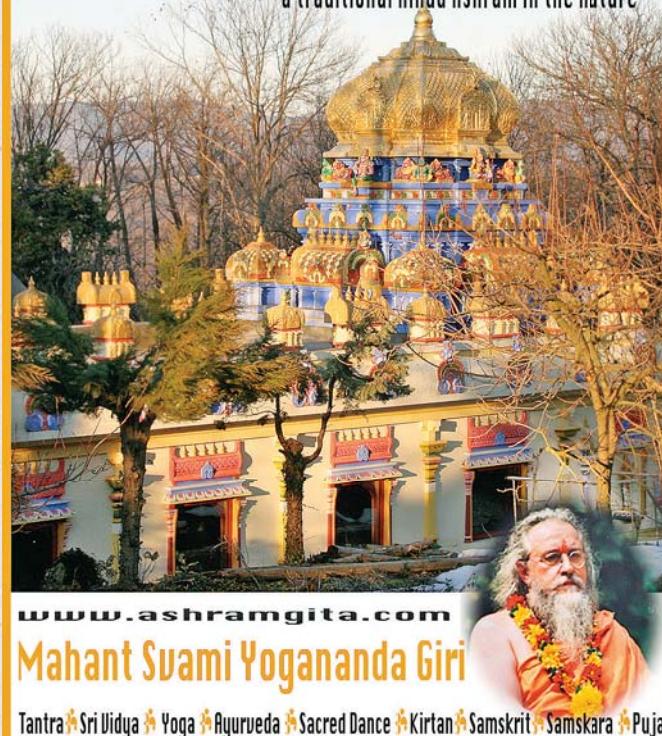
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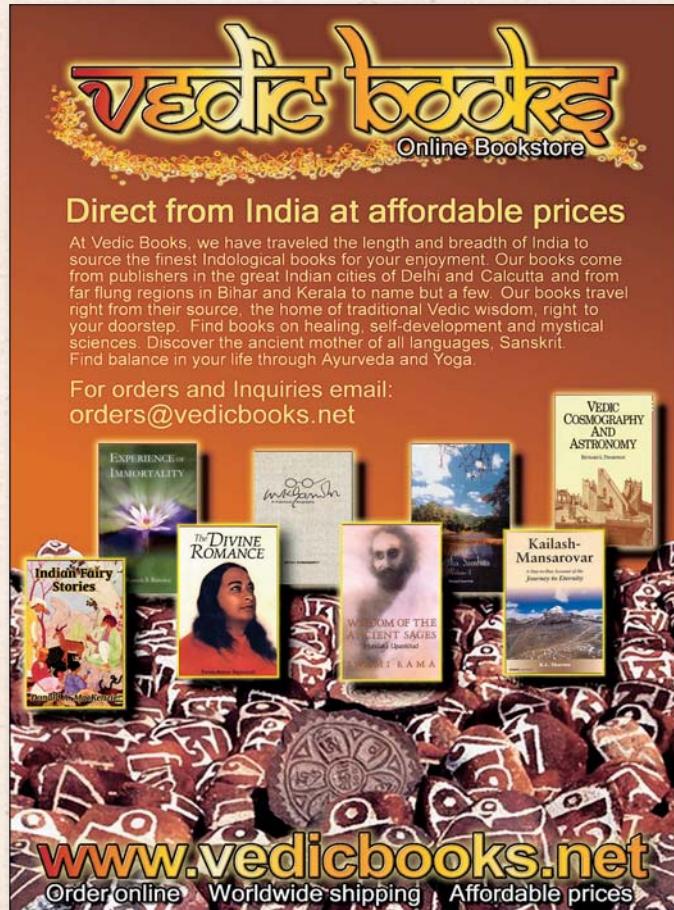


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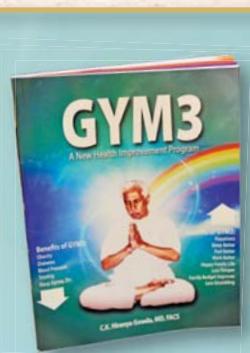


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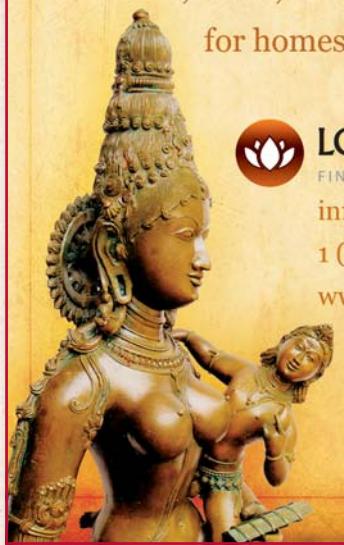
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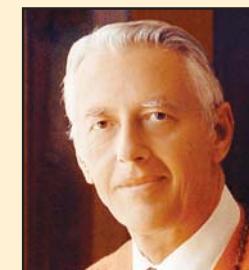
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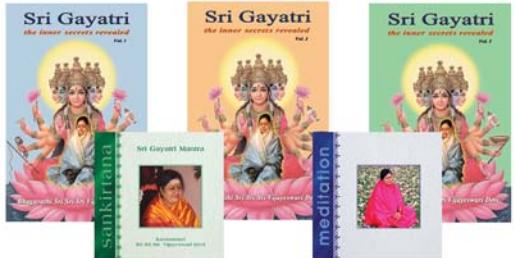
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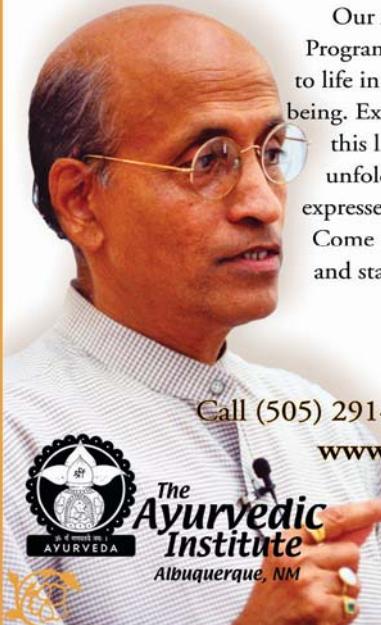
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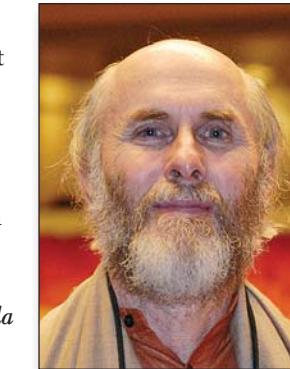
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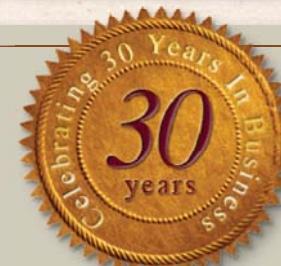
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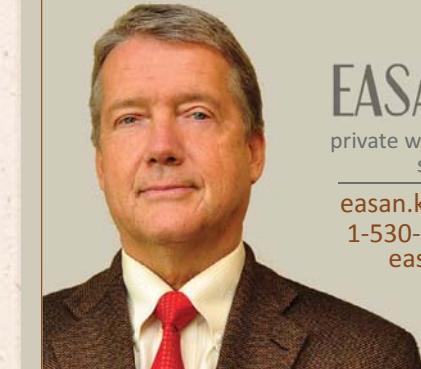


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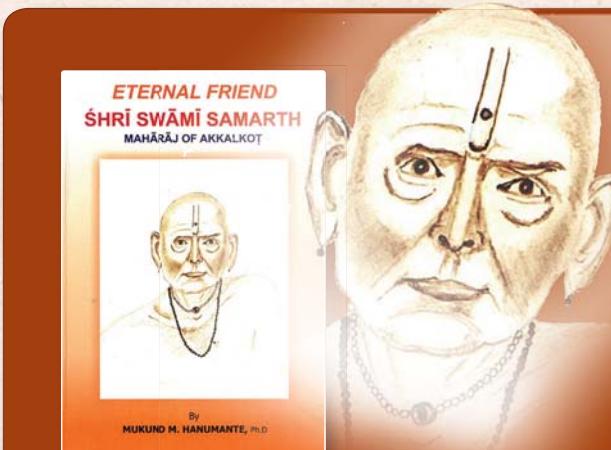


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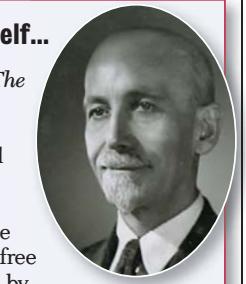
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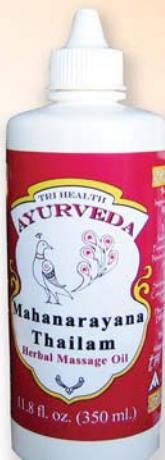
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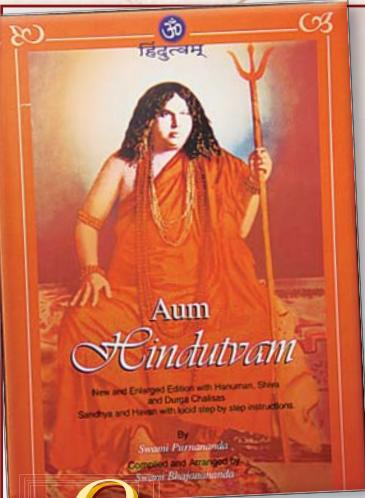
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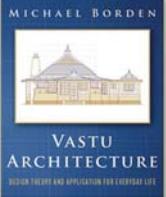
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*And from the womb
Of my thoughts
Issue forth these words:*

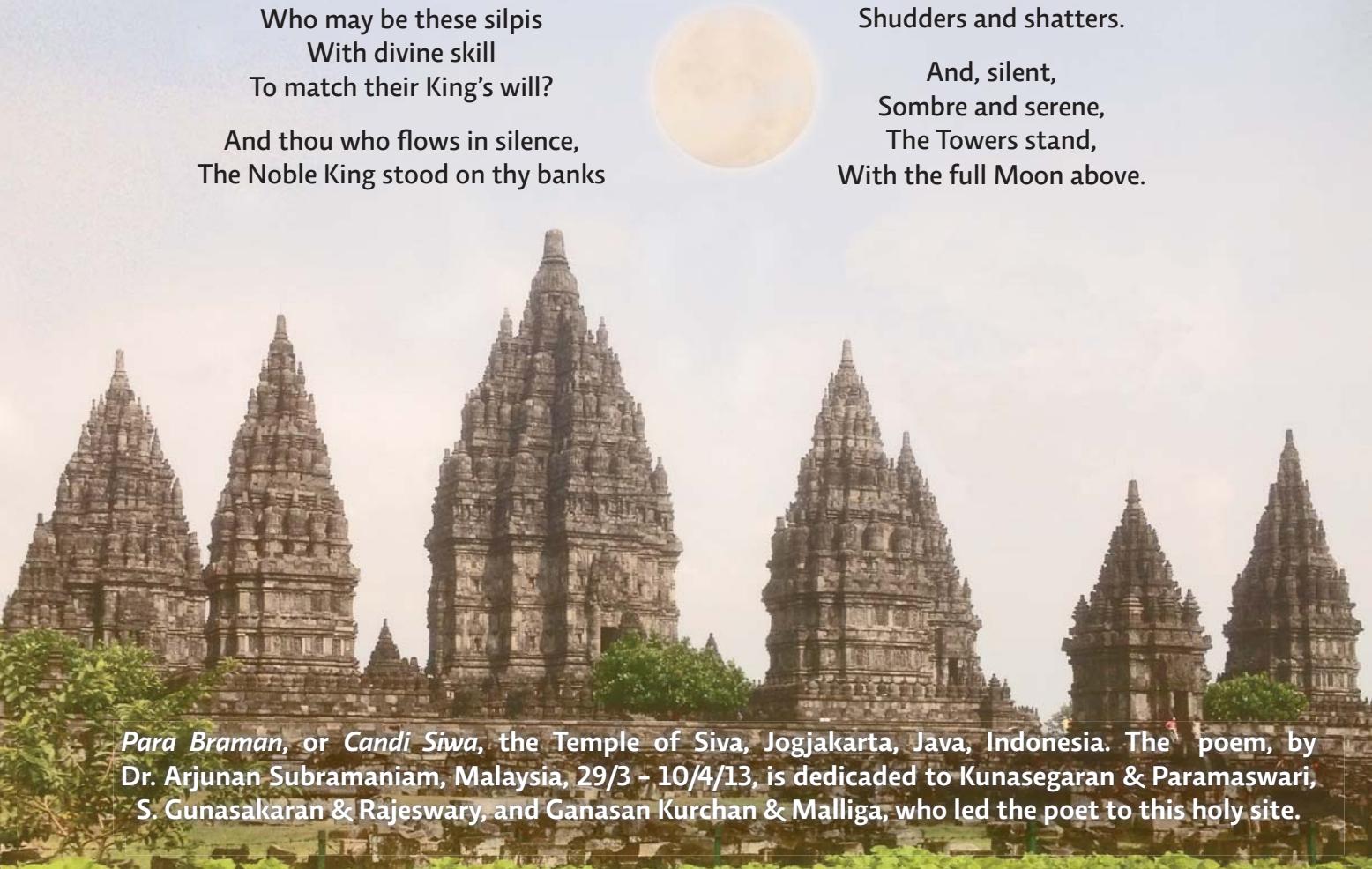
Who may be the Noble King
Who dared to build
On the grounds of Eternity
This range of mountain peaks
Pregnant with power
Like a painting on the canvas of Infinity?

To the right, the Tower of Vishnu,
To the left, the Tower of Brahma,
And in the middle rises
The Central Sun, the Absolute Siva.

A little boy can have no words of light
To capture the devotion
That conceived Thee,
Nor the boldness of Thy design
Defying the heights of human imagination.

Who may be these silpis
With divine skill
To match their King's will?

And thou who flows in silence,
The Noble King stood on thy banks



Para Braman, or Candi Siwa, the Temple of Siva, Jogjakarta, Java, Indonesia. The poem, by Dr. Arjunan Subramaniam, Malaysia, 29/3 - 10/4/13, is dedicated to Kunasegaran & Paramaswari, S. Gunasakaran & Rajeswary, and Ganasan Kurchan & Malliga, who led the poet to this holy site.

In body and in spirit, and watched
And watched his Central Sun rise,
Slab by slab, feminine, masculine,
Cut, interlocked and
Mounted in mathematical precision.

But lo!
Would the earth
Rumble once again, and...?

My child,
What is made of Earth
Shall return to the Earth.
What emanates from Me
Merges in Me.

Build, then, your Para Braman
In the four chambers of your Heart,
In your inner Consciousness,
Where no winds of desire
Can blow off your pillar of faith,
No Mount Merapi can rain fire
On your Temple of Truth, and
No earth trembles,
Shudders and shatters.

And, silent,
Sombre and serene,
The Towers stand,
With the full Moon above.

DIGITAL DHARMA

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mobiles and Mass Communication

THREE ARE OVER SEVEN BILLION PEOPLE on Earth. According to the International Telecommunication Union, the number of mobile-cellular subscriptions reached 6.8 billion in 2013! In the meantime, land lines have leveled off at about 1.3 billion. Mobile phones and their effects have been present in industrialized countries for years, but few people stop talking and texting long enough to actually think about how drastically mobiles have shaped their lives. In a few decades people have gone from having sometimes hours or days between communication—to being constantly available at the touch of a button. Throughout many countries, everyone now has the potential to communicate with anyone at anytime. A mobile-connected country is one united in a new and powerful way, and now a mobile-connected world is emerging. Telecommunications and the Internet have become humanity's central nervous system, instantly relaying information to anywhere on Earth.

Though communications technology has long been prominent in the US and Europe, it is relatively new in the developing nations of Asia and Africa. In 2000, the United States and Europe both reached the point of having more mobile phone subscriptions than fixed land lines—this expansion occurred just 15 years after the first mobile call was made. But comparatively the growing rate of use

in many Asian and African countries is staggering. It was a big deal when the US went from zero mobile phones to nearly every one of its 316 million people owning one in 25 years. But now India has jumped from 45 million wireless subscriptions in 2002 to nearly 900 million in 2012. Such growth would have been impossible with a land line phone system. India's mobile connections continue to rise by ten million each month. For a technical analysis of mobile phone impact in India, see bit.ly/india-mobile

Throughout many developing nations, mobile phones have been met with tremendous positivity and optimism. In a study of usage in South Africa, 85% of small business respondents interviewed had no other means of communication, and said that mobiles have reduced travel, brought higher profits, turnover and increased efficiency.

Another study, by the Indian Institute of Management, looked at mobile usage in India's slums. It found that in the average four-person household earnings for mobile users is 67% higher than non-users. The average monthly income for those who had owned a phone for less than one year was almost 25% lower than those who owned a mobile for over two years. And, the longer a person had a mobile phone, the more likely they were to be earning regular wages or be self-employed.

Information services in India are helping farmers through mobile phone notifications, voice messaging and help lines, providing information about diverse areas of farming. One farmer acted on timely weather information, received through the service *IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited*, to protect a harvested crop that was exposed to the elements. He estimates that without this information he would have lost 50% of the harvest. Making use of the service's information on planting techniques, diseases



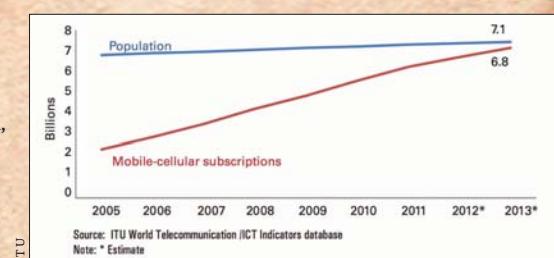
Connected: A young man in India talks on his mobile

and other practices, he shifted from "guess-based" approach to one of modern, scientific cultivation. He credited these changes with a 25% increase in his annual income.

The expansion of mobile voice services throughout the world is just the beginning. Internet access is the next big step in communication. Currently only about 40% of the global population has Internet access. However, this number is growing rapidly, made easier because mobile Internet has replaced the necessity of desktops for web access. But how to get fast, cheap Internet to billions, many in countries without the proper hard-wired infrastructure? One possible answer has been offered by O3b Networks. Partially sponsored by Google, this global satellite service provider has recently launched four of 12 new satellites designed to provide billions of consumers in nearly 180 countries with low-cost, high-speed, low-latency Internet and mobile connectivity. As you can see, the possibilities are endless.



Big data from cheap phones: Researchers in Kenya are using mass mobile data to track malaria outbreaks, pinpoint hot spots and message people about disease cases in their area. One of the researchers stated that if the disease were to be eliminated, this is how it will happen.



A mobile future: This graph shows the estimated growth in mobile data traffic worldwide side by side with the global population from 2005 to 2013